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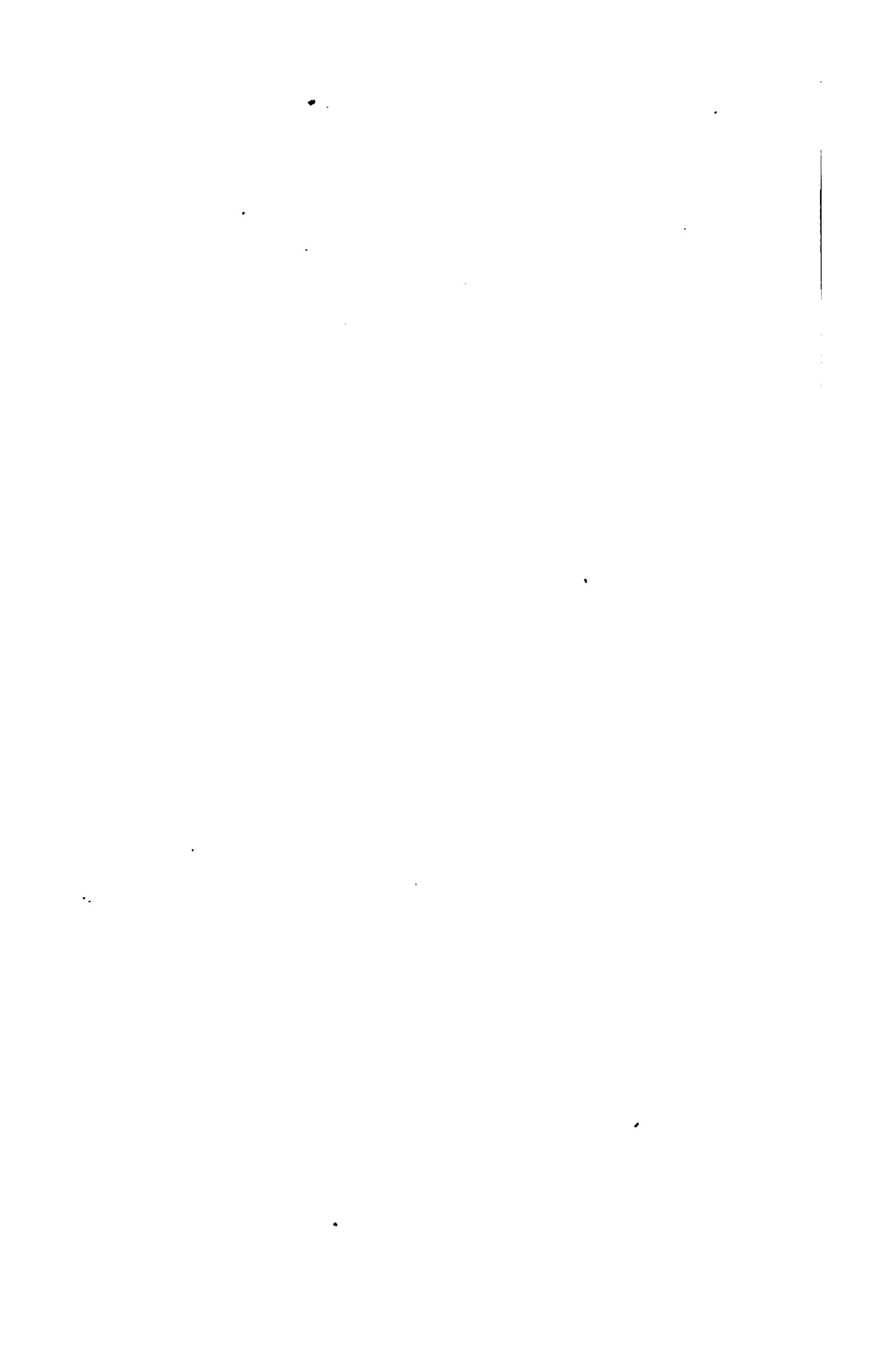
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STORM AND SUNSHINE:

OR,

THE BOYHOOD OF HERBERT FALCONER.

A TALE.

BY

W. E. DICKSON, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "OUR WORKSHOP," &c.

OXFORD AND LONDON:

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TO
MY MOTHER,
THIS LITTLE TALE
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

Goostrey,
July, 1857.

STORM AND SUNSHINE;

OR,

THE BOYHOOD OF HERBERT FALCONER.

CHAPTER I.

"HERBERT; and I am eight years old!" Such was the answer given by a bright-eyed little fellow to my question, "What's your name?"

There was something in the child's appearance which attracted me. He stood by a wicket-gate leading into a churchyard; in his hand he held a garden-rake; near him were two little fellows, whom I supposed to be his brothers. I saw at a glance that he was a gentleman's son, for though his hands were blackened with garden-mould, and his blue pinafore or blouse was of coarse texture, a very clean and fine collar encircled his neck, and a Scotch cap gave the finish to a figure which, in any disguise, would have made itself conspicuous by a childish grace peculiarly its own.

In a cheery voice, and with an open, fearless look,

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he told me his name ; adding to it the piece of intelligence relating to his age, with which I have commenced this chapter.

What is that mysterious power, lent to the innocent, which commands and enchains the interest and the affection of minds so different from their own ? What spell can that be which the gentle tones of a young child have power to throw over the will of the strong man ? With what strange attraction is infancy gifted, when unconsciously we turn to look again with an emotion akin to reverence at a countenance on which neither care nor guilt has cast a shade !

Whatever that power may be, Herbert possessed it. The guileless look, the gentle tone, the slight, graceful figure, threw their mysterious chains around his questioner.

We were standing, I have said, near a churchyard. The same wall which enclosed the resting-place of the dead encircled also a garden, which repaid the protection by lending groups of flowering shrubs, then in full bloom, to the sacred ground. The garden-gate closely adjoined that of the churchyard, and a neatly trimmed walk led you through the garden towards a small door in the chancel of the church. Amid the lilacs and laburnums I could see the corner of a substantial residence.

Now, I venture to assume that most of my readers (if they cared at all about the matter) would have quickly filled up for themselves the simple sketch

before their eyes, by concluding that the house was the clergyman's house, that the little boy was the clergyman's little boy, that he had been using the rake in the garden, and that he was now withdrawing (the sun was low) for the night. With these conclusions, they would have walked forward, and in another moment would have forgotten child, garden, house, and rake, in the contemplation of those more sublime subjects which the locality would naturally suggest. Little sympathy, perhaps, will they feel with the disposition, or habit, which impelled me to complete the picture with care, and even to give a Pre-Raphaelite minuteness to the foreground.

Seating myself on the low wall, and looking away from the child over the wide country, well wooded, but level, and marked in one place with the white vapour of a railway-train, I glided dreamily into speculations about the child, the house, the church, and a new grave, railed in, which was near the wall. Certainly, I concluded, he is the clergyman's son; certainly that house is the parsonage. It was his birthday, I fancied; the fact that he was eight years old was the great fact of the day. He has had a holiday from his lessons, and has been establishing a garden of his "very own;" and now he is going to drink tea with his mother, and be merry over a birthday cake. I conclude his father is living, because this is evidently a parsonage-house; I am pretty sure he has a mother, because, if she has died since the birth of those little brothers, the early grief would

have shewn itself in the countenance of this young hero. And glancing again at the child, his clear, merry eye and frank brow seemed to say, "I have had no early grief; and I am my mother's own eldest boy."

"I must go now," said Herbert. Not that I had asked him to stay. It seemed as if he knew that he was the subject of the stranger's thoughts; as if he was aware that he was a feature in the landscape, then mentally transferred to the imaginary canvas; a *tableau vivant* displayed to a single spectator,—and he would not drop the curtain on the scene without permission. He had leaned his chin on the top of his rake; he had been gazing across the distant country with the wistful look so often seen in children: the sun lighted up his fair young face, and a slight breeze stirred the brown hair which escaped from under his cap.

"I must go now," said he, turning suddenly.

"Good-night, my man," quoth I.

"Good-night," said the child. Then stopping, and as if urged by an unaccountable impulse, a blush mantling on his cheek, he said, "Do you know my papa?"

"No, dear," said I. And in another moment he was gone.

But the portrait of the boy was taken, more faithfully than by photographer. I can refer to it at will, even now, though many long years, chequered, as the years of this life always must be, with joys and sor-

rows, have rolled away. There he stands, in his blue dress, leaning on his rake, his little soiled hand contrasting with his fair throat, his blue eyes scanning the distant landscape; the portrait framed in above by an overhanging laburnum, and below by the scanty turf of the churchyard.

Oh how kind is that law of the All-wise, which puts a barrier between our dim sight and the future! How would the heart be grieved, how would the courage quail, how would the strong resolution be weakened and daunted, if we could look forward along our path, and see in the dim distance the dangers which threaten us!

For the present, let sunshine only rest on Herbert!

CHAPTER II.

THE red sun had ceased for some time to shine on the church, warming the sober-hued stones into ruddiness, ere I quitted my seat on the low wall. A crowd of recollections, fancies, and anticipations had driven, for the time, all thoughts of the scene then before me from my mind. I have been a traveller, and I have often noticed how forcibly persons and places far distant are brought near by the magic power of scenery illumined by the setting sun; as if the warm beams, as they left us, carried with them to

other climes our loving memories ; as if the glorious sun, ever rising, yet ever setting in the sight of earth's inhabitants, taught us all the lesson that love never dies. Especially am I conscious of this influence of sunset when the sea rolls and heaves in the west ; then the broad golden band of light seems to invite us to embark on that shining surface, and haste to the far-off regions whither the day is speeding. And if we people those regions with creatures of the imagination, brighter and more blessed than ourselves, if we allow ourselves to fancy that on those remote shores a happiness is to be enjoyed for which we sigh in vain, I know not that such imaginings deserve rebuke. They may bid the heart look higher and further, and give a glimpse of that shore where grief and toil will have no place, and on which an eternal Sun will cast His beams.

But no sea reflected the sunset as I saw it from the churchyard. The country, I have said, was level, but rich. Farm-houses and hamlets studded it here and there, conspicuous amid the green foliage and meadows by the peculiar red-tiled roofing which belongs to the district ; at intervals, a little red building, with a volume of black smoke surrounding it, betrayed the whereabouts of a coal-mine ; while on the horizon I thought I could discover signs of the existence of a large town, the metropolis of that mining district, and which was situated, I knew, in that direction. Masses of clouds brooded over this landscape, and seemed to threaten the termination of

the brilliant summer weather which had hitherto attended my tour.

I had really forgotten the little trio who had so lately scanned the prospect with me, when rising quickly to go to the inn in which I had resolved to pass the night, my eyes again rested on the tomb which had before caught my attention. I cannot tell why I had connected the child with this tomb, nor can I explain the motive which induced me to step carefully among the nettles and rank herbage, now loaded with dew, in order to read its inscription. I did so, however, and peering over the rails which protected it from desecration, I read as follows :—

“HERBERT FALCONER,
FORMERLY OF JAMAICA, WEST INDIES,
DIED MAY 21st, 18—,
AGED 65.”

I had not asked the surname of my young acquaintance, or ventured to interrogate him as to his parents : there is a respect pre-eminently due to children, which should ever prevent us from taking advantage of their innocent readiness to communicate information. But I felt no doubt that the person whose body lay buried here was the grandfather or uncle of the little boy, who was probably named after him, since the date of the burial corresponded nearly with the period of his birth.

Betaking myself to the village inn, I was soon seated in its old-fashioned parlour. The landlady

herself brought in the tea-tray, and in answer to my enquiries, informed me that Falconer was the name of the clergyman: "And a plain-spoken gentleman he is," she added. "Mrs. Falconer and him does a power of good among poor folk: he hurts hisself with his giving, that he does. When my master had a bout last fall, they was here early and late. Perhaps there's them as can beat him at sermons, but no one's kinder to the sick. He's highly respected, and he deserves it." This was only the cream, or kernel, of the good woman's discourse; I have not recorded, and, indeed, could not remember, the mass of extraneous and irrelevant matter with which she garnished her narrative. She needed no further questioning, but busying herself with needless arrangements of the tea-equipage and furniture, she proceeded to give me a full and particular account of the Falconer family, together with such parts of her own history and that of her husband and children, as were calculated (in her opinion) to illustrate the chronicle. The two biographies, in fact, were arranged by the hostess in parallel columns, with marginal references to contemporaneous events, and with notes and comments by the speaker herself; but I shall take the liberty of abridging the record for the advantage of my readers, and of retrenching those flowers of rhetoric and profuse adornments of epithet with which Mrs. Lamb overlaid the story.

She said that Mr. and Mrs. Falconer came to Inglethwaite about ten years ago, being then newly married:

"Indeed, they came straight from their wedding, and a power of folk went to church the first Sunday, to see the bride's dress. They all said she looked a weakly body; but howsomever, she's never been ill to speak on, although now she's six fine childer of her own. Master Herbert, the eldest, is as fine a little gentleman as you'd wish to see, Sir. I love him as if he was my own, I do."

She said that soon after the young couple had settled in their abode, they were joined by an elderly gentleman who had been much in foreign parts. "He was something akin to Mr. Falconer; his uncle," she thought: "and folk did say he had made a mint o' money beyond the seas, and that all would come to Parson Falconer at his death. Indeed, while he lived he made them comfortable, (though they said he was near in his ways); but anyhow, they kept a conveyance after he joined them, and 'Liza (that's my daughter, she's the nurse,) told me there was curious dishes made every day for the old gentleman, things as he'd been used to in the Injies, and couldn't do without nohow. Well, when he died, (seven years ago last Martinmas,) folk all said Mr. Falconer would be too grand now to live at Inglethwaite; but it was just altogether the other way, for he sent away the ponies and the carriage, and kept only 'Liza and another in the house; and Mrs. Falconer told 'Liza they must be very careful, for they'd nothing but what Mr. Falconer worked for: and our church, Sir," said the good woman, "is but a poor thing,—but a

poor thing. But I'm keeping you from your tea, Sir." And darting upon a dusty chair, which she wiped vindictively with her apron, she disappeared.

Inglethwaite is one of those wide, straggling parishes which are not uncommon in the northern counties of England. I have already hinted that coal-mining prevails in its neighbourhood, and being much interested in mechanical details, I determined to remain for a few days in my present quarters, intending to amuse myself by walks among the coal-pits, and by excursions to the seaport, where I might notice the shipment of the coal. My landlord's pony proved unusually active and tractable, and three days had slipped by pleasantly enough. Saturday evening had come, and I own I rather looked forward to seeing the Falconer family on the morrow at church. I had not met any of them in my walks or rides, which had not led me near that quarter of the village.

I had ordered a fire, for the evening was chilly, and I was sitting by it, enjoying its warmth, when Mrs. Lamb entered, her face wearing an expression of great importance. Carefully closing the door, and dropping a curtesy, she said, "I ax your pardon, Sir, and you'll think I'm taking a great liberty,—which indeed I am,—but are you a minister, Sir?"

I answered, certainly I was a clergyman.

"Well, Sir," said she, "I thought as how you were, though you don't look altogether like one;" (this was a cruelly unkind hit, unconsciously dealt, at my tourist's costume;) "but I thought as how

you were, and I made bold to come in and tell you that 'Liza's here, and says Mr. Falconer's in bed with a bad cold, and his throat's in a sad way, and Missis doesn't think as how he can shape anyhow to do his own preaching to-morrow. And, says I to myself, I won't say a word to 'Liza, but I'll just go into t' parlour and ask the strange gentleman plump and plain if he'll preach to-morrow."

My incognito was thus fairly broken; what could I do but send my card by "'Liza" to the parsonage, with an offer to relieve Mr. Falconer from his duties on the morrow? I did this, and soon received a note from Mrs. Falconer in reply, thankfully accepting my services.

CHAPTER III.

THE bell, sounding next morning from the tower, reminded us that it was Sunday.

Perhaps it is merely the power of association which seems to us to throw a peculiar tranquillity and calm quiet over the very landscape on the Sunday morning, but so it is, that few can have failed to remark how singularly even the still life of nature seems to harmonize with our devotional feelings. In a country village, perhaps, this participation of all surrounding objects in our observance of the day is specially remarkable: the silence of the barn, which has echoed, during the week, the strokes of the flail; the groups of tidy

children who move past the window at a tardy pace towards the Sunday-school, conning over their collect or hymn ; the clean smocks of the carter and his boy, who turn the lazy-looking horses into the pasture for the day,—all these, with many other signs, remind us that the period of welcome rest for man and beast has again dawned on us.

And Inglethwaite was one of those old-fashioned places in which many customs of a former day, now fast falling into desuetude, were kept up. It was usual for most of the men to wait in the churchyard until the clergyman arrived, so that he walked up to the door through a crowd of honest fellows, who doffed their hats to him as he passed. Old women, at Inglethwaite, still carried their books to church neatly wrapped in a pocket-handkerchief, together with another, clean and neatly folded, for show ; and all the older inhabitants dropped a curtesy or made a bow on entering the church, whether the clergyman were in it or not. Whenever the Doxology occurred in the service, all made an obeisance.

I need not describe the church : my readers have seen many like it. In truth, it was not remarkable in any way : it was plain and neat, but not interesting in an architectural point of view ; even if it had been so, I could not undertake to describe it at length,—for I frankly confess that I am not so keen an observer of the works of the past as of the men and manners of the present. And the men and manners of Inglethwaite, as exhibited at church, made a deep impres-

sion on me. No ignorant barbarisms rendered the village psalmody intolerable to a cultivated ear; a choir of children and men sang most pleasingly to the accompaniment of a small organ, played by a lady. The congregation seemed to me to join devoutly in the responses; and I never saw any body of persons more attentive to the lessons of the day. It was evident that their clergyman was one who felt the importance of order and beauty in public worship; his own reverent spirit and devout demeanour was reflected, I did not doubt, in the members of his flock.

I was met at the door, when the service was over, by the lady who had acted as organist.

"My little boy must introduce me," said she: "he tells me that he is an acquaintance of yours;" and coming forth from behind his mother, Herbert boldly stretched out his hand as to an old friend. Retaining it in my own, I accompanied Mrs. Falconer to the parsonage; and as we turned in at the wicket-gate, I could not help reflecting how singularly we are often placed by chance (as we call it) in a position which we have seen little hope of attaining. It was at least strange that I, who had been indulging the idlest of reveries concerning the child who had attracted my attention, should now be thrown into the society of his parents; and as he led me along the walk, eager to shew me the garden which he and his brothers had been forming in a neglected corner, a strong presentiment took possession of my mind, that the acquaintance was not destined to be transient, but that my

fate would probably be linked and intertwined with that of my little guide.

Such presentiments may be unworthy of our attention ; they may be merely the vagaries of a mind prone to speculation ; they may often be little more than the exercise of common foresight, which perceives the train of effects likely to ensue from some simple cause ; but for my own part, I must continue to entertain the belief that in many cases the mind exerts an intuitive power, above and beyond the exercise of ordinary foresight, and that coming events occasionally cast their shadows broadly and strongly across the mirror of imagination. My tale will amply prove that the presentiment in this case was no mere fancy !

Mr. Falconer's illness proved somewhat serious : he occupied his chamber for several days before I was allowed to see him ; and when, at last, I was escorted by the children into his room, I saw, with regret, such unequivocal signs of weakness, that my offer of further help in his parochial duties could not, in common kindness, be withheld.

I need not dwell on these early pages of my story, or describe the trifling circumstances which led to close intimacy with the Falconers. Suffice it, that the fall of the leaf found me an inmate of the parsonage, acting as curate to Mr. Falconer, whose health had never been fully re-established ; and as winter crept on, and the keen winds whistled around the high church-tower, and bore a salt spray across

the open country, as it became evident that, for the sake of all by whom he was held dear, he must lead the idle life of an invalid, the probability of my protracted residence at Inglethwaite seemed greater. At last, as the new year came in, heralded by bright frosty suns and light snow-showers, I found myself fairly installed as curate of Inglethwaite. My college-servant had sent down to me a supply of books, and some articles of furniture, which now garnished a modest parlour at the village post-office; and, seated in the favourite easy-chair, with a view of the new quadrangle over the fireplace, I could almost fancy myself in my old rooms at Cambridge.

Herbert had the run of my dwelling, and full often did he avail himself of the privilege. Many long hours would he pass poring over the engravings of an old-fashioned Encyclopædia; stretched on the hearth-rug, with the big book before him, or kneeling before a chair which bore the volume, he would silently amuse himself during the whole of a wintry afternoon with the somewhat uncouth representations of birds, beasts, fish, reptiles, and indescribable creatures belonging to none of these classes, with which the quaint work abounded.

CHAPTER IV.

"WE don't see much of Herbert now," remarked his mother one day, with a smile, drawing the truant towards her at the same moment. "His father and I have half a mind to beg a great favour of you, Mr. M——; no less a favour than that of relieving us of the trouble of teaching a young scape-grace, who likes birds and beetles much better than Latin grammar!" And the fond pride with which she put his hair off his forehead, while he looked up with that sidelong glance so winning in children, shewed that the bantering manner was well understood by the boy.

"Many a true word is spoken in jest," said Mr. Falconer. "In sober seriousness, I really do wish to consult you about Herbert." The door closed, as he spoke, upon the boy and his mother, and in another moment I heard a lively air on the schoolroom piano, and the pattering of little feet in gleeful hornpipe.

"About Herbert," said Mr. Falconer, pausing, as if he expected me to reply.

I hardly knew how to reply, for in truth, though interested in the child and in his parents, I had never contemplated the possibility of becoming his tutor. Moreover, since I had obtained my Fellowship, I had been more or less a wanderer; and the passion for wandering, which often enslaves men of leisure during the first few years of independence, had by no means

left me. Any engagement which seemed to tie me to a fixed residence in England ran counter to all my favourite plans for the ensuing summer. Yet, even as he spoke, the strangeness of my present intimacy with Mr. Falconer strongly tinged the rapid current of my thoughts. My wanderings had brought me to Inglethwaite; I had been thrown unexpectedly into the society of its clergyman; the acquaintance had ripened into warm mutual esteem; and now I was asked to place myself in a most important relation towards the child whose frank bearing and youthful freshness had first attracted my attention.

All this rushed through my mind like lightning; but I saw that the momentary hesitation raised a flush in the cheek of Mr. Falconer, as if he feared he had presumed too far upon our newly-born friendship, and offered his cherished first-born to one who might coldly decline the charge.

Hastening to relieve him, but not without embarrassment, I assured him that it would give me real pleasure to act as Herbert's tutor during my stay in the village. My conscience smote me as I made this qualifying reservation,—but Venice and Athens seemed to loom dimly in the background as I spoke, and I could not at the moment resolve to give them up. "While I remained at Inglethwaite," I repeated, with a hardened heart, "I should really be delighted to teach Herbert;—a fine little fellow,—a great favourite with me. A few months might do much in preparing him for school."

Mr. Falconer sighed as he thanked me. The sigh, I thought, was not so much one of disappointment at my qualified acquiescence, as of general uneasiness and anxiety. He was silent for some moments, and at last he said, with perceptible emotion, "Would it be troublesome to you if I ask you kindly to listen to the details of some matters which are making me very anxious just now? I really need advice; yours will be truly welcome." He became agitated; his weak health had tried his nerves severely.

"My dear Sir," I said, "any advice which I can give, now or at any other time, will be most heartily and readily offered;—but choose another time for talking of these matters, whatever they are, which give you so much uneasiness. You are not at your best to-day."

"No time like the present," said he, in his usual tone, and with a sad smile. "The fact is, (and I will not conceal it longer from you,) I am convinced that my present weak state of health is caused by anxiety, and that I cannot hope to regain my strength until that anxiety is removed. And I am now meditating certain proceedings which may at least put a stop to the suspense which is wearing me out.

"I began about Herbert; or rather Emily, (Mrs. Falconer,) by her mention of him just now, put it into my mind to consult you on the whole sad perplexity. When he was born, we had a relative living with us, who had spent all his previous life in the West Indies."

"I see his tomb in the churchyard," said I: "Is Herbert named after him?"

"Yes," said his father, "he is named after him, and was born to the expectation of being his heir: quite a little fuss was made about him, poor darling,"—this with a smile, in which melancholy contended with a sense of the ludicrous,—“as if he had been a duke’s son almost, instead of the child of a country parson. If ever child was born with a silver spoon in its mouth (as the old saying goes), Herbert was that child.” He got up and stood before the fire at this point, and spoke rapidly and huskily. “My uncle was peculiar, and had not the gift of a winning and gentle address. Poor Emily bore with much petulance from him: I was wrong to suffer it,—but I acted for the best, or at least I thought I did. His habits were luxurious: the table kept for him was far more expensive than we could afford,—(you know, Inglethwaite is no ‘Golden Prebend,’)—yet beyond a trifling sum which he laid on the baby’s pillow after its christening, my uncle made no allowance to us. He always said, ‘It makes no difference,—you’ll have it all soon;’—and what could I say or do,” (this he asked with some vehemence,) “under such circumstances? Was I dishonest, M——, in pretending that I was content and at ease, while every half-year I was overdrawing my account at the bank to supply my uncle’s luxuries? I see you blame me,—I deserve it; but you know not the difficulty, in such a case, of altering a system once begun. If I had been

frank and firm when my uncle first came to us, all would have been well. I was not; and now——” He paused to take breath, and sat down.

“I had screwed up my courage,” he continued, “at last, to ask my uncle for an advance, when a very awful event occurred. He had dined, and was seated in his easy-chair, watching the baby, which had been brought at his request into the room. We were all looking at the little fellow, when a gasp from my uncle startled us, and, turning round, we saw that his head had fallen back, and the pale shade of death was on his face. It was all over in a moment. When the doctor came, he had been dead an hour.

“We were dreadfully shocked: but you will know how to forgive me, if I frankly confess that a feeling of relief succeeded the first emotion of horror. My poor uncle was not a man to win affection; and moreover, he talked so much himself of his wealth, that it is, perhaps, no wonder the infection of that most debasing love, the love of money, was caught by others. He had hinted that a very large sum indeed was left to Herbert, a life-interest in it being reserved for myself; and though I grieved over the suddenness of his death, which left no room for even one word of prayer, yet I did reflect with indescribable relief that now all pecuniary anxieties were over.

“Conceive, then, my astonishment and perplexity, when a diligent search failed in discovering any will whatever! Not a single document, not a single

memorandum could we find, bearing in any way upon the investment or disposition of the vast sums which he had boasted of! There were piles of old accounts relating to estates in Jamaica, and which shewed that at one time his commercial transactions were on a very large scale, but nothing which could in any way bear the name of a testamentary disposition.

"And now," he said, turning sadly towards me, "if I go no further, you see the position in which I am. The murder's out now. From that day to this, I have never received one farthing from the supposed 'estate!' Year after year I have striven and struggled to diminish my terrible and crushing debt at the bank; but with six little ones, what can I do? My own and poor Emily's private means, small as they are, are tied up by our marriage settlements;—indeed, but for them, how could we live? The bankers are most kind and considerate; but the interest alone of the debt, and the annual premium for the insurance of my life, swallow up the whole income of Inglesbywaite!"

The poor man looked the picture of misery. I wished with all my heart I could comfort him.

"Is it possible," I asked, "that your uncle wilfully deceived you?"

He shook his head as he answered, "I know not what to think. Such cruelty seems, indeed, incredible. He may have been once as wealthy as he said he was, and may have suffered reverses which he was unable or unwilling to realize to himself;

or there may have been foul play on the part of others.

"I set off, immediately after the funeral, to London, to call on the agents with whom I found, by his papers, he had corresponded. No will had been deposited with them, and they had for a long time ceased to receive any remittances on his account. They told me one important piece of intelligence: my uncle was the father of a large family, including at least two sons, in Jamaica. The mother of these children was a Creole woman, who had always represented herself as his lawful wife; and the agents believed that the eldest son had of late managed the plantation. 'Of course,' (the merchant said,) 'if he was the late Mr. Falconer's legitimate son, he would now be the owner of the lands. If otherwise, the heir-at-law would do well to look after his interests.' His significant shrug shewed plainly his own view of the matter.

"Now," continued my poor friend, "I ought at once to have gone out to the West Indies, and investigated the title to these valuable estates. But I lacked energy for this. The voyage, then made in sailing-vessels, was far more formidable than it is now; I must have borrowed more money for my expenses, and must have left my parish for many months, paying a curate the while. I *could* not go! I wrote, however, to a lawyer in Kingston, commissioning him to make enquiries, and tried to buoy myself up with hope.

"Of course you are prepared to hear that my cousin indignantly declared himself the lawful son and heir of my uncle, and that all hope vanished."

He paused here, and ringing the bell, desired the maid to request Mrs. Falconer to come to him. The piano ceased, and his wife, with an anxious look, entered the room.

"Emily," he said, "our friend has been kind enough to hear the story of our troubles. Will you tell him about that last West Indian letter?" She went first to the fireplace, and bringing a phial of sal-volatile, bathed his forehead with the spirit. Then in a clear voice, and with a cheerfulness which almost concealed her own connection with the story, she told me that a few months ago a letter arrived, directed to herself, with no other address than the very vague one, "England." It was covered with the post-marks of various towns in this country, but the perseverance of the Post-office had been at last rewarded by finding the true owner.

"I can shew it to you," she said; "but you could not read it, I am sure. It is strangely written, and wildly expressed; but after many efforts, we succeeded in making out that it was written by some one who called herself 'Rosa,' and who penned it in an agony of rage and jealousy, excited by my cousin Falconer. She could ruin him, she wrote, as he had ruined her; she could bring him down from his fine house, and she would do it: yet rage seemed to give place to irrepressible grief and anguish as the letter pro-

ceeded ; and in the end she only signed herself 'the miserable and unhappy Rosa.'"

"Here, then, you see," continued Mrs. Falconer, "is clearly a person who knows our name, and believes that *we* could be the instruments of her vengeance. This poor creature, Rosa, (whoever she is,) may possibly be in possession of legal proofs of the falsity of the present occupier's title to the estates. Ought we not, is it not a duty almost, to go out to Jamaica and endeavour to pursue this faint clue?"

"If it were only for ourselves," struck in her husband, "I should abandon all enquiry. We could live on our income unembarrassed. But if we could pay the bankers!"—His face lighted up at the very thought.

"The children, too," said the mother: "if we could but have good education for them!"

"Hope springs eternal," I murmured to myself. And who could grudge it, faint though it seemed, to that poor crushed man?

"In a word," said the invalid, "we have resolved, or nearly resolved, to undertake this long voyage and wearisome enquiry. Dr. Jones tells me that a sea-voyage is, of all things, the most likely medicine for my lungs; and at any rate, I feel I should be better even in the very act of exerting myself. If we fail, an but come back to look the worst in the face, ar our burden meekly; if we succeed,"——he dd no more. Herbert, coming in at that mo-

ment, said, "O Mamma, O Mr. M., here's such a beetle! I found it in a cistern they have used for tarring railway sleepers in! I thought it was a little frog!" And opening his handkerchief, he shewed one of the large water-beetles not uncommon in stagnant pools.

CHAPTER V.

NONE of my readers, I trust, will be surprised to hear that I placed myself unreservedly at the service of the Falconers. I could not but give my voice heartily in favour of the voyage; the medical recommendation alone was an unanswerable argument for the scheme, even if the chances of success in its main object were slight. I offered at once to undertake the duties of Inglesby for any period which might be necessary, and to carry on the education of Herbert during the absence of his parents. Nay, in my genuine commiseration for my friend's sad anxiety, I even allowed myself to speak in cheerful terms of Herbert as my regular and permanent pupil.

The father and mother were pleased to receive this as a kindness on my part, and almost distressed me by expressions of gratitude: I was more than rewarded already by perceiving that I could in some degree alleviate their pain. Could I help reflecting with a feeling of awe, as I walked away from the

parsonage, and passed the stile near which I had met the children, how evidently I had been brought thither to play a part in this drama of real life? Chance! I believe not in chance. It is but a name which we substitute for one much holier. The Power which gives all their charm to children, appoints work for men. And I paused at the wall of the churchyard with an indescribable feeling of reverence, as if in that place I had met an angel; into my mind shot the words, "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." I was excited, no doubt, by the narrative which I had heard, and by deep and heart-felt pity for the narrator; and now the thoughts which rushed across my brain were overpowering. I am no believer in apparitions,—in unseen and heavenly influences I believe firmly; and I brave the ridicule of those who scorn such belief, when I confess that I stood bare-headed on that spot under the darkened sky, and felt that I was mysteriously bidden to befriend those friendless ones;—a feeling of satisfaction, of elation even, took possession of me. The tour in Italy was dwarfed into insignificance in presence of the new pleasures which were opened before me! And yet all this was a miserable proof that unselfishness was with me a new sensation!

Mr. Falconer seemed quite another man when once the great resolve was taken. He gained strength rapidly; his brow lost much of its sadly careworn expression; he visited the cottages and farmhouses, speaking to all the people of his unavoidable voyage, and trying to bring home to their humble capacities

some conception of its length and character. He had set himself the task, he told me, of visiting every house without exception; and many a hard hand wrung his with heartiness as he wished them "good-bye." It soon transpired in the village that "he and Missis were going to try and get their rights," and hearty wishes were expressed for their success,—for the love of justice is strong among the English poor; and it is quite an error to suppose that they ever grudge or envy the prosperity of those who, though their superiors in station, are their equals in kindness.

At last all was ready. A state-room was engaged on board the magnificent steam-vessel "St. Laurence;" it was her first voyage, and her speed, strength, and beauty were matters of general and common remark. She was to sail from Southampton, and one of my strange impulses had constrained me to go and see her as she lay in the dock. A truly noble ship! It seemed as if her massive timbers and gigantic machinery could know no failure, though a certain vague disappointment followed the information that she was built, not of oak, but of pine. I was there when she was hauled out into the stream, and I was rowed round her in a boat, admiring her proportions; I saw the heavy baggage of my friends stowed on board, and then I hastened back to Inglethwaite to speed and cheer their departure.

I will not sketch the parting, though in truth it proved far less painful than I had anticipated. We know how a stern sense of duty nerves and braces the

mind to necessary exertion ; and both the travellers had abundant reason to feel that the journey and voyage were forced on them by duty's inexorable command. With him, the desire of honestly discharging his debts overpowered every other consideration. She saw only the plain and welcome duty of lightening his care, and watching over his health. As for the children, four of them were too young to understand the sadness of a parting ; and though little Emmy wept bitterly, I am far from sure that she knew why she wept. The feelings of children are not deep. Deep feeling can only arise from deep reflection. We learn to mourn when we learn to foresee consequences and estimate results. Herbert's tears were manfully repressed ; he made himself officiously useful about the arrangement of the packages, and only his uneasy restlessness shewed his emotion. And yet, if his thoughts had been expressed in words, I believe they would have been all concentrated in one imploring petition to be allowed to go with papa and mamma across the sea.

But when, after printing one fervent, long kiss on each little soft cheek, the parents entered the carriage and were borne away from us, the long-suppressed tears burst forth. I knew not how to check them ; indeed, I did not try. After a while, I proposed a long walk, and was relieved to see the old gleam of cheerfulness light up the child's eyes. His mother had left with me a little packet sealed up, and with these words written on the envelope : "For my own boy.

With his mother's blessing." I did not dare to give it to him just then.

In two or three days a letter arrived from the voyagers, sent home by the pilot. They were in the chops of the Channel; all was well thus far: Mr. Falconer quite free from sea-sickness, and rejoicing in the fresh breezes; Mrs. Falconer rapidly shaking off the troublesome malady. The enclosure contained a letter for the children, written in a large round hand by the tender mother, and giving an amusing account of their little cabin, miscalled "state-room;" of the black cook of the ship; and of a monkey, the pet of the crew. These first tidings of our absent ones soon circulated in the parish; and when the petition in the Litany "for all who travel by land or by water" was read next Sunday, I believe they were forgotten by few.

I had taken up my abode altogether at the Parsonage: a most respectable elderly servant took care of the children. I had begun a regular system of lessons on the very day after my friends' departure, knowing that healthy employment is an infallible remedy for unavailing regret; and the arrival of the letter found us already tranquil and cheerful. I gave the packet to Herbert one evening at bed-time, and was glad to find he could shew me its contents,—a pretty little book on Natural History,—with only a flush of happy and proud affection, next day.

"Mr. M——, where do you think the ship is now?" was the constant question of my little pupil. It was

difficult to fix his mind at first on his lessons: the slate or book would fall from his hand, while his eyes seemed to gaze at a picture, incessantly present, of a steam-vessel ploughing the waves. And every night, when his little prayers were said, he added the petition, "Pray, God, keep dear papa and mamma from the dangers of the sea, and bring them safely home."

CHAPTER VI.

FIVE days had elapsed since the departure of our travellers. I had been tracing on a map with Herbert the course of the ship, and making rough guesses at her probable whereabouts; and now his bed-time had come.

"May I say my prayers to you, instead of to Mrs. Johnson?" he asked, in his artless way.

"To be sure, my child," I replied; and, kneeling down, he repeated his simple form, adding the special petition which I have mentioned. I looked at the little kneeling figure with an interest which I cannot describe. His helplessness and dependence on me; his gentle, confiding temper; his share in the cruel wrong inflicted by the uncle,—all these things affected me powerfully; and when he rose, I drew him near me, and said, "May God bless you too, dear Herbert, and strengthen you, and all of us, for any trial He

may send on us." At that moment, in the mirror over the fireplace, I saw the reflection of Mrs. Johnson, standing at the open door of the room. She vanished in a moment, but I had seen her face, and can never forget its expression of horror and despair. Sending away the child, I rang the bell. The countenance of the woman had chilled my blood; yet I formed no idea whatever of the cause of her agitation; and when, instead of the housekeeper, Lamb, the publican and carrier, stumbled in thick clogs over the mat, I thought some sudden illness or death had occurred in the village.

"Sir," said he, swaying himself from one foot to the other, "I have just got home from market; and folk are saying as how there's a big ship got lost on her first voyage to the Injies."

A deadly faintness came over me; I sat down, and really could not speak. The honest fellow came up to me, and speaking softly, as if he remembered the children, said, "It mayn't be master's ship, after all. I couldn't hear the name: folk hadn't heard it. But there is a ship lost, that's sartin."

As a drowning man catches at a straw, I caught at this gleam of hope. He had heard no name. And yet—"a big ship,"—"her first voyage,"—these details were dreadfully exact! When I had recovered myself a little, I questioned him closely. He believed a "commercial gent" had brought the news: it wasn't in the paper, for he had asked the question at the "Spread Eagle." It was common talk all

over the town ; and "there's no denying," said the poor fellow, (his voice faltering as he spoke,) "that they all say it's master's ship."

I cannot explain how it is that minds which are prone to indulge in forebodings of evil at ordinary times, not seldom prove incredulous of bad tidings when they are actually brought home to them. I am generally somewhat given to presentiment ; the risk of failure and disappointment generally presents itself to me in a stronger light than the hope of success. Yet, after the first shock given by Lamb's communication, hope sprang up with wonderful force in my mind. The welcome fact that no one had heard the name of the ship stood out boldly in the forefront of my hurried thoughts. It was natural enough, I said to myself, that people at Dockborough, many of whom knew Mr. Falconer well, and were perfectly aware of his embarkation for the West Indies, should think with solicitous anxiety of him when any shipwreck was reported. We had heard of no violent gales on the coast, moreover ; and at Inglethwaite had been even thankful for remarkably calm weather, and had been gladly imagining that our wanderers shared it. The picture of the stately ship, riding at her anchor in the Southampton river, rose clear and bright before me, and with it the remembrance of the marvellous strength of timber, and magnitude of machinery, which had impressed and astonished me. I never thought of the pine-wood ; but if I had, I doubt if the thought would have checked the rush of san-

guine hopefulness which succeeded my first emotion of despair.

I know not if others, in like circumstances, would have experienced this revulsion of feeling; I can only record that I felt it. The very hopefulness of which I was conscious became a new source of hope. In ordinary circumstances, (as I have said,) I am prone to take a gloomy view; now, I persuaded myself, my unwonted elasticity of spirits was an augury of the happiest kind. I hastened to Mrs. Johnson, and poured out to her the arguments which gave so much comfort to myself. Above all things, I conjured her, by her love for the poor children, to conceal from them the crude and improbable report which was in circulation.

The worthy woman's judgment bowed to mine. She dried her tears, and only said, "If praying for them could help them, they shouldn't want for it."

I returned to my study, but soon found I could not sit calmly down again. The current of my thoughts, disturbed and thrown out of their usual even channel, began to flow again towards fear. I had refused a hearing to the arguments of mistrust; now they clamoured more loudly than before. I could bear inaction no longer. Summoning the housekeeper, I said, "Mrs. Johnson, I shall go to Dockborough, and hear for myself what these people say. It is too bad," I added, trying to summon up a little indignation; "it is too bad to frighten us in this way; it is heartless;"—but while I spoke, the choking sensation in my throat belied my words.

"Sir," said the good creature, "you'll never be thinking of going to-night to Dockborough ! Lamb's horse can't go again, you know, and there's no other. It's as dark as a pocket, and looks like rain."

"I cannot remain quiet," I replied : "I must go and sift this thoughtless report," (so I still compelled myself to style it). "Be good enough to pack up a small valise for me : and if I do not return before morning, be sure I am gone down to Southampton. But spare the poor children all this suspense and anxiety : to them, not a word !"

She left me, and I stole up to Herbert's room. He lay peacefully sleeping,—a little shapeless lump in the bed. His steady breathing, and the bright flush on his cheek, shewed the healthy and happy slumber of childhood. "O my God," I inwardly exclaimed, "can it be that he is an orphan !"

Another hour saw me on my road to Dockborough. I was on foot ; I carried my little valise ; seven good miles were before me. But I was glad of the exertion ;—my spirits rose again with the exercise. The March winds had not yet begun to blow ; and though the night was dark, a curious and fitful reflection was thrown over the sky by the furnaces of some iron-works near Dockborough. And as I neared the town, I could perceive out at sea the intermittent gleam of a light-ship, moored on a bank off the mouth of the river.

The clocks struck two; and the streets were utterly deserted.

I made my way to the principal inn, and, after knocking and ringing for a long time, was admitted by a sleepy-looking "Boots." "I am sorry to disturb you," said I, "as I don't want a bed; but I have very particular reasons for wishing to see the newspapers which came in last." The man stared at me as if he thought I was mad; but on my giving my name and residence, he touched his cap, and said with quick perception, "It isn't in the papers, Sir; not a word about it. It was a gent what came down by the ha'-past five train what told us about it."

"Who was he?" I asked; "and where is he now?"

"He's in bed," replied Boots. "No. 18. To be called at 8."

"Go to him," said I, putting half-a-crown into his hand, "and tell him a gentleman will be grateful to be allowed to speak to him."

Off went the man, and I followed him up the staircase. The knocking was answered only by inarticulate growlings, until, losing patience, I opened the door, and said, in a loud voice, "Pardon me, Sir, but I must speak with you on a matter of life and death."

"Why, what on earth—?" said he, raising himself in bed, with a scared look.

"I am concerned to be thus troublesome," said I, "but I am very deeply interested in some news that you have heard. Is there a West Indian steamer lost?"

He answered at once, with the utmost civility, and in a tone of kind commiseration, "No trouble at all. When I left London this morning there was a report of the kind; I heard it just as I got to the train. The guard told me it was said she was burnt. And they talked of 150 lives being lost. That's all I know about it. It'll be noticed in the evening papers,—but let me see, they won't be delivered here till breakfast-time."

I thanked him, and withdrew. The additional rumour, that she was burnt, sank like lead on my soul, for I remembered the pine timber; and an idea had struck me, while I was on board, of its inflammability. Hastily collecting my energies, I asked the man when the mail-train passed for London. Lugging out a watch, he said it was then due: "I doubt if you'll catch it, Sir."

"Let us try," I exclaimed: "another half-crown if we do." Seizing my portmanteau, he sallied from the house. We ran headlong along the empty streets, but in the next moment the shrill whistle of the train fell on our ears. "Come on, Sir, come on," cried Boots; "we may do it now." We ran at the top of our speed, and dashed into the station just as the train began to move off again. A shout from the porters warned me of the danger,—but I had sprung on the footboard of the guard's van, and was now roughly dragged into it by that official.

"Upon my word, Sir," he began, angrily,—but his

anger was soon appeased when he saw my overpowering anxiety.

"Tell me," I said, when I could speak, "had any shipwreck been telegraphed to Newcastle before you left?"

"Yes," he said; "the 'St. Laurence' is lost. Terrible thing;—burnt, they tell me; all the lives lost but about a dozen."

All was over, then. Herbert! my poor child! His little figure rose before my eyes, kneeling, with his hands clasped, and praying for his parents. I threw myself down, completely overpowered, and could not restrain my tears.

The guard said what he could to comfort me; and, with a delicacy far from uncommon among the humbler classes, asked no questions as to my connection with the ship.

CHAPTER VII.

THE rapid train sped on, and in due time reached London. Day was breaking on the great city when I threw myself into a cab, and desired the man to drive me to Lloyd's. The rooms were not open, but a respectable porter, or doorkeeper, met me in the passage, and in reply to my eager questions said that a telegraphic message had certainly been received the day before, acquainting the underwriters with the total loss, by fire, of the "St. Laurence," in the Bay of

Biscay. There were no other particulars, he said, but intelligence might be expected almost at any hour: perhaps the newspapers would have it as soon as anyone.

I cannot describe the terrible sinking of the heart which oppressed me as I turned away from the Royal Exchange. I know not why, but it never occurred to me to hope that, although the vessel might be lost, the lives of my friends might be saved. I was stunned and rendered faint by the awfulness of the calamity; and I was walking away, hardly knowing where I was or what I did, when the driver reminded me that I had not paid him. I begged his pardon, and after exerting myself to consider what course to pursue, I desired him to drive me to the office of the "Times" newspaper. On the way, however, the dizziness and headache increased so rapidly, that I determined to go to an inn: I remembered that I had had no refreshment since I left Inglethwaite; I felt the necessity of husbanding my strength and energies for the duties which I foresaw must devolve on me. I stopped at an hotel, therefore; and after swallowing some breakfast, I sat before the fire, and, worn out by fatigue and excitement, fell asleep.

I slept four or five hours; for when I awoke, the buzz of everyday life had fairly begun in the streets. Two or three waiters were bustling about the room; and one of them handed a newspaper to me, saying, "Terrible accident at sea, Sir: loss of the 'St. Laurence';—second edition, Sir."

I actually received the paper with coolness : I was astonished by my own self-possession ; I accused myself of want of feeling. But the truth is, that the terrible anxiety of the last few hours had done their work, and had left my mind listless and impassible. I could not read the account ; and when I hastened into the bar of the inn, and begged the mistress to read the names of the few survivors, I had great difficulty in understanding what she read. I listened, however, for the word "Falconer," and when she ceased without its occurrence in the narrative, no additional weight of grief fell on my heart, overloaded already.

I will not weary my readers by detailing the various accounts which successively reached me of the destruction of the "St. Laurence." For several days after my return to Inglethwaite, different versions of the awful story continued to arrive by each post ; and a feverish hope was sometimes roused by the unexpected appearance of a few survivors, and by the possibility that a raft had been constructed, on which many of the crew and passengers might have reached the coast of France. My purpose will be better answered by relating the whole narrative of the disaster, as it was afterwards told by the survivors, and as it appeared in the newspapers of the day. Seldom has a more awful calamity been chronicled in their pages.

The noble and magnificent new steam-ship "St.

Laurence" sailed from Southampton on the afternoon of Friday, January 2, 18—. She was a beautifully built ship of 2,250 tons burden, with a flush deck nearly 300 feet in length; and was propelled by two engines, each of 400 horse power. She carried a miscellaneous cargo, valued at little less than £100,000, together with the priceless freight of 162 souls, namely, 50 passengers, and a crew of 112 persons. The value of the ship herself was fully equal to that of the cargo.

Her commander, Captain Smith, was well known in the service as an officer of competent skill, and a man of the most unbending resolution. It was not a little remarkable that he had shewn much unwillingness to go to sea in the "St. Laurence." He had been appointed to another steamer, not yet completed, and, with the tendency to superstition common among sailors, he had disliked to sail in a strange ship; but it would be a libel on the memory of a truly brave, kind-hearted, and honourable man, to suppose that he had any doubts as to the safety of the noble vessel under his temporary command. The pilot reported that when he left the ship at the Needles, the captain took leave of him with the words, "Well, God bless you; you have done your duty, the responsibility now rests on me."

The "St. Laurence," we have said, was a perfectly new ship; and it was necessary (as it always is in cases) to watch the working of her engines with care not needed subsequently, when every part has

become fitted to its place by use. The "bearings" (or metallic blocks on which the paddle-shaft revolves) became much heated about nine o'clock on the evening of her departure; the engines were stopped, and the bearings were cooled by pumping cold water on them. A very large quantity of grease, however, was unavoidably kept ready for use outside the store-room.

Attention was unremittingly given during the next day, Saturday, the 3rd, and up to half-past twelve on that night all was going on well; the bearings were cool, the engines at three-quarters speed, and though the night was dark, and a gale was apprehended by the captain, the noble ship made good progress.

It was near one o'clock on the morning of Sunday, the 4th, when Mr. Vincent, midshipman of the watch, on going below to set the time by the captain's directions, saw smoke and fire coming up the fore-hatchway past the ship's galley. He gave the alarm to the officer of the watch, and ran aft to inform the captain, who instantly came on deck, and directed his whole energies to the suppression of the fire.

The alarm-bell was rung, and cries of "Fire" roused the sleeping passengers, who rushed on deck in their night-dresses to find the ship illuminated fore and aft by a sheet of fire burning with intense brilliancy, and rising from the main hatchway above the engines. The exertions of the captain and officers were continued with desperate energy while a hope remained of extinguishing the fire. Some hay was

hove overboard ; the hose of a fire-engine was brought forward ; wet swabs and other things were placed on the gratings of the spar-deck hatch. But the men were soon driven back by the intense heat ; and in a very few minutes it became evident that nothing now remained but to endeavour to save the lives of the passengers and crew.

No description can convey any adequate impression of the scene on the deck of the doomed ship. Only one or two of the passengers were even partially clothed. Tender women were there, clinging frantically to husbands or brothers ; one held an infant to her breast. Death, in its most frightful form, stared them in the face : they were at the mercy of three of the elements, for the wind was blowing "half a gale" from the S.W., and there was a heavy sea on. The firemen had been driven from the engine-room by the flames, and the vessel was plunging madly through the waves at full speed. The last order which the captain was heard to give was, "For God's sake, Mr. Roberts, put her before the wind :"—the effect of this would have been to diminish the rush of flame aft. — Young Vincent instantly ran to the helm, and put it hard up until the ship paid off.

But the speed with which the vessel continued to move through the water rendered it extremely difficult to lower any of the nine boats with which she was provided, even if discipline and order had not now been totally lost.

The first boat lowered was the mail-boat, with

about twenty-five people in her. The moment she touched the water she swamped, and all hands that were in her drifted astern, clinging together with dreadful shrieks. The next boat was the pinnace. By some accident the after-tackle alone was unhooked, and she was dragged forward by the fore-tackle with such rapidity that the sea swept round her sides, and washed every soul out of her.

The "gig," however, containing six persons, and the "dingy," with Mr. Vincent and four other persons, succeeded in leaving the ship.

The "second cutter" had just reached the water, when a sea struck her bow, and as the ship rose from the swell of the waves, she lifted the boat perpendicularly by the stern-tackle, and threw out all the unfortunate inmates but two, who hung, shrieking, across the thwarts.

One of these was a lady, who held her infant child in her arms! With one hand she held fast the thwart of the boat, as it hung perpendicularly from the tackling; with the other she clung to her babe; and for half an hour she remained in this frightful position. At last the boat was cleared by two engineers and others, who were the last to leave the ship; and in it the heroic mother remained for seventeen hours, without food and without clothes, until she was lifted, half insensible, but still clinging to her child, on board the vessel that rescued the party,—the Dutch ship "Gertruida," Captain Teinteleer.

Another lady wrapped herself in a blanket, and

hung suspended by a rope over the side of the burning vessel, until, watching her opportunity, she dropped into one of the boats. She was in this boat for twenty-eight hours, and displayed a heroism seldom equalled. Once, when the men were wearied out with rowing, she stood up in her night-dress, and said, "Come, my lads, cheer up, keep up a little, or I must take an oar!" The appeal was answered by renewed exertions, and at seven o'clock on the morning of Monday they were picked up off Brest, by the same Dutch ship which had picked up the other boat.

Meanwhile, one of the life-boats, with sixteen souls on board, had succeeded in pushing off from the ship. "We drifted clear," says a passenger who escaped in her, "the doomed ship rushing madly forward, the sport of the combined fury of the three elements; but far above the roaring crash of wind, and wave, and fire, rang the shrieks of the helpless sufferers on board the ill-fated 'St. Laurence.'" Falling in with the dingy, which was too small to live in such a sea, they took her five occupants on board. One of these was young Vincent, who evinced all the qualities of a true sailor and a brave man. He divided his upper clothing with the men; and, ably aided by the passenger whose words I have quoted, and seconded by the sailors, he remained near the wreck for nearly three hours, not daring to do more than keep the head of the boat to windward.

"About four o'clock," says the same passenger, "it
to rain heavily, which beat down the sea: we

pulled astern of the burning ship. Her funnels were red-hot, and as we crossed her stern at the distance of about half-a-mile, her magazine exploded; and soon after she sank beneath the waves, and the red lurid light which for the last five hours had illumined the dreary expanse of ocean, and formed the strong ground of hope for the attraction of succour, was succeeded by a gloomy darkness."

Five hours after daybreak these brave men were picked up by the "Marsden," of London, Captain Evans. They were treated with the utmost kindness, and were landed by him at Plymouth about midnight on Tuesday. They mourned the loss of the boat as the loss of an old friend, when she wore through the tow-rope and went adrift about thirty miles from the English coast.

Three boats, therefore, were known to have been picked up, viz., the boat containing the lady and her infant, the boat containing the other young lady, and the boat containing Mr. Vincent. A fourth, it afterwards appeared, lived through that awful night, and was picked up by a Dutch ship in the Bay of Biscay on Sunday night. It contained four passengers, and nine engineers and seamen.

To the honour of the French Government be it recorded, that it immediately despatched a steamer to cruise in search of survivors who might have constructed a raft, or succeeded in launching other boats. The English Admiralty also sent two steamers to the spot. Not a vestige remained, however, of the ship,

or her living freight. The captain had been seen working desperately to save the ship, but he appeared to have made no effort to save his own life, and when he was last seen, he was standing near the wheel with a passenger, a well-known author, apparently resigned to the fate which seemed inevitable.

With a heavy heart I set off on my return to Inglethwaite. I had ample leisure, as I sat in a corner of the carriage, to ponder sadly and deeply on the terrible blow which had befallen the six little ones who had hitherto known no care and no grief. At first, I had been able to realize only the sad truth that they were orphans, deprived of the loving protection of parents ; but now, as I moved onwards in the dusk of evening, and as the darkening landscape ceased to offer any diversion to my thoughts, the full extent of the calamity unfolded itself before me. Their parents were indeed taken from them,—this in itself was grief enough ; but how much additional painfulness was given to the bereavement by the circumstances which attended it ! Mr. Falconer had no relations of his own, I knew, save those cousins in the West Indies who were chief actors in the occurrences which had led to all this misery ; Mrs. Falconer had spoken sometimes of her family, but in terms which led me to believe there had been some estrangement or coolness which divided her from them. I remembered thankfulness that my poor friend had spoken of
 nall property, secured by his marriage settle-

ments; and yet it was fearful to recall the terms in which he had mentioned his debt to the bankers, and to contemplate the probability that those innocent children would inherit the consequences of their father's insolvency. Of course, Inglethwaite parsonage must be left; and very gloomy were my reflections, as I reviewed the many cheerful hours of pure and childish happiness which I had shared within its walls with those who had now reached the eternal shore.

For the moment I forgot the children; my mind engaged in an endeavour to realize the scene which, perhaps, surrounded the last moments of the lost ones. The mother's figure rose before me, as she leaned over her husband's chair relating the story of the letter; now I thought I saw her clinging to him for protection, pale and horror-stricken, yet striving to be firm. Could I doubt that the thoughts of both were with the little band at their home, never again to be visited in the body? Was it the mere suggestion of an excited and over-wrought imagination, that my own name was murmured by both with an expression of thankfulness that their darlings would not want one friend?

I could think of it no longer. I let down the glass of the carriage and gazed out. We were speeding along in the darkness, but on the horizon I could see the well-known glare of the furnaces.

In a short time the train stopped at Dockborough.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN a hired vehicle I slowly approached Inglethwaite. I cannot describe the overpowering sensation of positive dread and apprehension with which I contemplated the meeting with the little orphans. I almost wished I had written to Herbert ; but no, poor child, this would have been leaving him to suffer alone. Then I stopped the driver, under the influence of a sudden idea that I would spend the night at Dockborough, and send for Mrs. Johnson in the morning ; but this, again, I abandoned, and once more we proceeded. At the entrance of the village I alighted, and dismissed the carriage. The cottages were all darkened, for it was late, and early hours were kept at Inglethwaite ; I met no one in the village street, and the silence was only broken by the baying of a dog at the cottage of the gamekeeper. I stopped at the churchyard wall, and sat down on the stile. But a few months had passed since I met, on that spot, the children now so strangely committed to my care ; yet the events of whole years seemed to be crowded into that brief interval, and not a shade of doubt found a place in my mind that I had not been destined from the first to stand in the place of parent to the little mourners. I remembered well the strange elation which had taken possession of my mind on that spot but a few short weeks previously ; and though no feeling of a like kind now came to cheer

the sad current of my thoughts, I could contemplate more calmly the prospect before me. I knelt on the stone step of the churchyard, and though I uttered no words of prayer, I felt that I had committed the care of the fatherless to God.

Stealing round to the back of the house, I knocked gently at the door of the kitchen, and in another moment was admitted. Mrs. Johnson began at once, without giving me time to speak, "O Sir, I know it all! you needn't tell me! Poor master and missis! I knew they would come to no good by going! Didn't I always say so, 'Liza?'" and she threw herself into a chair, and rocking herself to and fro, hid her face in her apron, giving way to her tears. The younger servant sobbed audibly.

"Do the children——?" I said, with hesitation, half hoping that my most painful duty had been forestalled.

"Bless their poor innocent hearts," said the good woman, "they see that there's something wrong. We've had a terrible day, Sir, since we heard the fresh news: I hav'n't known how to keep it from poor Master Herbert, that I hav'n't."

"I let him say his prayers as usual," she resumed, after a pause. "It wasn't wrong, I hope, Sir? Sure I thought *they* might look down and see him praying for them, poor darling! I almost got myself into thinking *they* were not far off;—there's strange things do happen!" and both the women looked round with an uneasy expression of superstitious alarm.

I passed into my study, and with a heavy heart retired to rest.

In the morning a cheery little voice cried through the keyhole of the door, "Good morning, Mr. M. ! Do make haste and come down ! Emmy and I have been drawing such a picture of the ship ; and papa and mamma are looking over the side, and the monkey is in the rigging !"

Poor dear innocents ! must I soon wring your gentle hearts with grief !

Probably the task of communicating grievous tidings is the hardest which falls to our lot in the performance of those duties which human sympathy and kindness bid us undertake. I revolved in my mind half-a-dozen different schemes and plans for softening the blow which must fall on these little ones ; and at last, fairly baffled, I determined to be guided by circumstances, and to act on the spur of the moment. If "second thoughts are best" in many, or most cases, there are, nevertheless, not a few situations in which a calm trust in the suggestions of the moment may safely be substituted for deliberate reflection : we may realize, perhaps, in such positions the meaning of the promise, "It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak."

The two children ran to meet me with the picture, —a scrawl, I need not say, on a slate, the absurdity of which at another time would have provoked a smile.

I put it gently aside, and greeted the little ones with an affection most unfeigned and tender. But their tell-tale countenances shewed that they noticed my grave face, and I could see that the cold shadow chilled their innocent cheerfulness, and a troubled look, as if they feared they were in disgrace—poor souls!—flitted across their features.

I felt that suspense would be torture to myself, if not to them; and, struck with a sudden idea, I sent Emmy on an errand to Mrs. Johnson; and then, taking the slate, I said to Herbert, "Well, Herby, and how much of this did Emmy do?"

"Oh, she only did a little bit," said he: "you know she can't draw much. I'm a great deal older than she is!"

"You like to be older, don't you? because then you can help her, and be her little guard and teacher."

"Oh yes," he replied: but he began to look a little puzzled by my manner.

I took him by both his hands, as if I were about to tell him a story; and looking into his eyes, I said, "Suppose you were walking with Emmy across a field, and Farmer Jones' bull ran after you? what would you do? run away and leave Emmy?"

"Oh! Mr. M.!" (with offended surprise); "why, of course I should tell her to walk quickly towards the stile, and I should keep between the bull and her, and make believe to throw stones at him."

"Or if Frank and Harry managed to tumble into the brook, what then?"

More and more puzzled, he said, "I should call out to them to scramble to the bank ; (you know the brook's not deep ;) and then I should pull them out, and run home with them as fast as we could."

"And if," said I, trembling from head to foot—the child perceived it—"if Emmy, or Frank, or Harry had done wrong, and were crying and unhappy in consequence ; or if they were grieved and sorry about anything, you would try and comfort them, and dry their tears for them ?"

"Yes," said he, softly, and now quite perplexed.

"Well, darling," I said, "that is what dear papa and mamma would wish you to do ; and if they never came home again, they would know that their little Herbert was taking care of his brothers and sisters."

His colour came and went rapidly.

"But they will come home again," he said.

"They are gone home, dear," said I, very solemnly. He looked up with a start.

"My darling," said I, "they are gone home to God."

Poor fellow ! he gave a cry which went to my heart ; then he laid his head on my knee, and wept bitterly. I could only smoothe his hair soothingly ; but in a few moments I began again to speak softly of his brothers and sisters, reminding him that he was the eldest, and must comfort them. I asked him, "Could he go now and tell poor Emmy, and try to keep her from grieving too much ?" He rose, and keeping his face turned from me, he ran out of the room.

When I saw them again, some hours later, their eyes were red and swollen with weeping, but the worst was over. They met me with shyness and constraint, but in a short time this wore off. I was determined to accustom them to speak of their parents: I am convinced that we commit a grave error when we cease to mention the departed, or speak of them only in whispers, or by mysterious allusions. Surely by banishing their names from our daily conversation, we aggravate the pain caused by their absence. By little and little I told the children the whole sad story of the loss of the ship; and I believe that the bitterness of the sorrow was softened to them by this association of a thrilling narrative with their terrible loss. Conflicting reports, I have said, reached us during the next few days; hopes were aroused in some minds by tidings of unexpected survivors; but these I never communicated to the children, and ere long they ceased to agitate us. The awful story, as I have related it in a former chapter, remained deeply imprinted on our memories.

The coldest heart might have been moved by the sight of the little band of mourners which assembled on the Sunday morning; the little ones inclined to be rather proud of their new black clothes, the elder brother and sister so unwontedly grave and tearful. We were on the point of sallying forth to church, when a gentleman on horseback passed the gate, and made for the inn. In another minute he was following us on foot, and he entered the vestry of the

church almost at the same instant with myself. He introduced himself very courteously as the Archdeacon of Riverton : " We have all heard, of course," he said, " of poor Mr. and Mrs. Falconer's fate ; and I have ridden over this morning to ask if I may relieve you of the duty in church, which it might cost you a very painful effort to perform yourself." I thanked him unfeignedly ; in truth, I had dreaded the exertion very much : if our hearts had been full of tender recollections on the previous Sunday, what emotions would have overpowered us on this ? The Archdeacon performed the whole service ; and in his sermon he spoke very movingly and beautifully of the departed pastor.

After church, he told me how much he had been touched by the sight of the orphan family in the pew near him : " I could scarcely proceed," he said, " when I saw the eldest boy finding the places for his brothers, and trying to keep them quiet and attentive, while the tears were on his own cheek. Poor things ! it is well, at any rate, that poverty will not be added to their other grief. Of course they are amply provided for."

" Indeed," said I, " I much fear it is very far otherwise. I have reason to know that they will inherit little or nothing."

He seemed amazed and shocked. " I always heard," he replied, " that the late Mr. Herbert Falconer, the uncle, who lived here latterly, had left a very large fortune to these children ; and it was given

out that poor Mr. and Mrs. Falconer had sailed for the West Indies on business connected with one of their estates there."

A long conversation followed, in which I ventured to communicate to this kind-hearted man the main features of my poor friend's case. He interrupted me with many expressions of astonishment, indignation, and pity, and made several comments which proved the shrewdness of his judgment, and his capacity, as well as willingness, to assist me by his advice.

"Poor children! poor children!" said he: "what is to become of them?"

"They are to stay with me," I answered, "for the present; that is quite settled."

He grasped my hand warmly, and in a short manner peculiar to him, said, "Good: very right, my friend. You won't regret this. You shall hear from me again. Good-bye."

CHAPTER IX.

It became my duty to lose no time in enquiring into the true position in which the children were placed by the death of their parents. I had placed seals on all the depositories of papers in the house, and had summoned the lawyer who acted for Mr. Falconer to conduct the search for a will, or other documents necessary for our comprehension of the

difficulties before us : on his arrival, we proceeded to our melancholy task. I found that he was well aware of the debts which weighed so heavily on the mind of my friend, and of the provision made for the little ones in the event of his death. He said that Mr. Falconer had paid the usual extra premium on his policy of life-assurance before engaging a passage to the West Indies, and that therefore the amount due from the office would discharge his debt at the bank. Probably, he said, any other liabilities would be more than discharged by the proceeds of a sale of the household furniture and effects. There would then remain the small income—he thought it was not £200 a-year—secured by the marriage-settlements: “We must contrive somehow,” said the cool, phlegmatic man of business, “to make it suffice for their maintenance. The two little girls might be got into the Clergy Orphan School at Riverton; and we might get the four boys into some place of the same kind, or send them to one of the cheap schools of the North, on a special agreement—so much for all four.”

I had hardly patience to hear him to the end of his remarks; but I knew the man did not intend to speak heartlessly, and that he could not be expected to enter fully into my feelings as regarded the children. I could not conceal, however, the disgust and aversion which arose in my mind at the idea of these cherished little ones, sent away to be the recipients of cold charity among strangers. I suppose I expressed
‘f somewhat strongly on the point, for the lawyer

had fixed an astonished gaze on me, and was preparing to back his propositions by arguments, when I cut short the threatened discussion by proposing to search for a will among Mr. Falconer's papers. He agreed, after a moment's reflection, that it would be proper to do so. He was himself the only surviving trustee under the settlements, Mr. Herbert Falconer having been the other: "And in truth," said he, with a shrug, and a look of some vexation, "I do believe I am the person on whom the arrangement of all the business must devolve."

I began positively to hate the lawyer.

He continued, as we rose to begin the search, "Mr. Falconer had some idea of recovering a West Indian property, I fancy. Good-bye to that now, of course. If I'm the guardian, I'll have nothing to do with it. Where could the expenses come from, I should like to know?"

There was a contemptuous insolence in his manner, as if he regarded my poor friend still as a needy client. How different would his tone have been, if the expectations held out by the uncle had been fulfilled! What obsequious attention would have been paid, if little Herbert had been the heir of thousands! And was this man to be the legal guardian of the friendless children? I could not bear to think of it!

Our search was not a long one. Tied up in the same packet with other memoranda, was a document endorsed "Last Will and Testament of Henry Falconer."

"Here's what we want," said Mr. Deedes, the lawyer: "who's to hear it read? Are we to read it alone, you and I?"

"Call in the servants," I replied: "they honoured and loved their master, and will feel they are paying a last respect to him."

Mrs. Johnson and Liza were accordingly summoned. I explained to them that we were about to read the will, and begged the elder woman to attend carefully to the provisions made by her master for his little ones.

The will was duly and regularly executed. I need not recite it, in all its tedious legal formality; it will suffice if I state the substance of it. It began with a touching reference to the uncertainty of life, and to the risks and hazards of the writer's long voyage, and with a solemn and earnest commendation to God of his own soul, and of the temporal and eternal welfare of those whom he loved more than life itself. Next it referred to his debts; and laid a solemn charge on his executor to see that they were paid out of the proceeds of his policy of life-assurance, now in the custody of Messrs. Locke and Co., the bankers at Dockborough; and it conjured him to preserve for the children the inheritance of an honest name by using every effort to discharge to the utmost farthing every liability outstanding at the time of his death. Lastly, it appointed the writer's "dear friend, R—— M—— (myself), sole executor of that his last will," and earnestly requested him to become the guardian of his children.

Mr. Deedes stopped, and looked at me with a countenance in which curiosity was ludicrously blended with satisfaction at his own release from a troublesome office, and with something like annoyance at the complete overthrow of his schemes relative to the Clergy Orphans.

For myself, I was irresistibly impelled to cross the room and shake hands with Mrs. Johnson, who, having understood very little of the legal documents, was considerably surprised by the proceeding.

"Well, Sir," said Mr. Deedes, "then you're commander-in-chief; and I have only to see that the dividends on the stock are duly paid to you for the infants."

"You know best," I answered, "where my duties begin, and yours end: I can only say I accept cheerfully and gladly the guardianship of the children."

"Are you the guardian of the children, Sir?" asked Mrs. Johnson, simply.

"I suppose so," I answered. Her face beamed with pleasure; but she only dropped a low and ceremonious curtsy, and left the room.

On examining the other papers contained in the packet, we found a letter addressed to myself. It was marked "Private;" but after perusing it, I communicated its substance to Mr. Deedes. Mr. Falconer craved my pardon in it—(poor fellow! his expressions touched me deeply)—for inflicting on me the burden of the executorship. He could not but feel, he wrote, that even if he escaped the dangers of the sea, his life

was a precarious one; and he considered it highly probable that the duties of the office would soon devolve on me. Under this impression, he implored me to befriend his widow and his little orphans: the trial of leaving them would be inexpressibly lightened by the thought that his upright and honest intentions would now be made manifest to the world by the payment of his debts; and if, by the issue of the impending voyage, he were enabled to place the dear ones above the reach of poverty, he could die in the enjoyment of a peace and tranquillity to which he had been long a stranger. He added, that I should find Mr. Deedes an honest and upright adviser, though not a warm-hearted friend; and he explained to me the nature of the settlement under which he was a trustee. Once more commending his little ones to my care, he bade me "farewell."

I shall spare my readers the dry and wearisome detail of my interview with the bankers, and of my enquiries into the exact state of Mr. Falconer's affairs. Without entering into minute particulars, it will be enough to state, generally, that the debt at the bank was completely covered by the amount payable on the policy; and that the bankers, who were perfectly cognizant of the circumstances in which the children were placed, with a noble generosity which did them great honour, refused to receive the half-year's interest then due. I found, however, that many tradesmen had claims against the estate of my poor friend,—for when once debt has cast its chains

round a man, it is hard to prevent the increase of the evil ; and it was quite clear that a considerable portion of the proceeds derived from a sale of the furniture would be swallowed up by these demands. Still, it was an inexpressible relief to me to know that the crushing debt which had weighed down the soul of my friend was now discharged : I reflected with a mournful satisfaction, how thankful he would be if he were still with us, and could peruse the discharge-in-full given me by the bankers ! Truly might it be said that, in the all-wise decrees of Providence, it had been ordained that he should expiate his error with his life !

I made the requisite arrangements for a sale of the household effects, and began to consider somewhat anxiously whither I should betake myself with my charge.

CHAPTER X.

THE choice of a residence for the children now became an anxious question, and one which pressed for immediate decision. Several plans had suggested themselves to my mind, and had been, one by one, rejected ; and I had just resolved to consult the kind Archdeacon in my perplexity, when he appeared, leading his horse towards the stable.

I had not time to join him in the yard, before he

had entered by the kitchen, and with a kind word to Mrs. Johnson, and an abundance of greetings to the younger children who were with her, he had ushered himself into the study. He seemed to bring with him an atmosphere of cheerfulness. He was a hale old gentleman, with grey hair, and a restless eye, which seemed to take an inventory of everything at a glance, and to make a memorandum of it. He wore high riding-boots and spurs; and I suspect that in his youth he had been no mean horseman. His voice had a charm which arrested the attention of the hearer whenever he spoke; like some deep instrument of music skilfully played, it had a pathos when he was serious, and a brilliancy when he jested, (which he did very often,) quite irresistible. And when he laughed, he had a way of turning to everyone present, as if to assure himself that his merriment was shared by others.

Into the study he walked without ceremony, and in a loud, hilarious voice, saluted me with "Good morning to you, Mr. Vicar of Inglethwaite! Wish you joy of your promotion!"

I was really vexed with the Archdeacon. Not having caught his exact words, and seeing Emmy, who was easily frightened by a boisterous voice, ready to cry, I thought the banter unseasonable; and I am afraid my countenance shewed what I thought.

"What, do I frighten you, my little woman?" said the good man, dropping his voice at once to a melodious sweetness: "come and make friends with

me, and I'll speak roughly no more;" and he sate down in an easy-chair, while the child went timidly to him, and sate stiffly on his knee, with her finger in her mouth.

"Seriously and truly," said the Archdeacon, in the dulcet voice, "you are Vicar-elect of Inglethwaite. I've just come from Lord Hartlebury, and he says you will really oblige him by taking such a small living."

He did not tell me, what I discovered afterwards, that he had travelled to London on purpose to see the Earl, and to press him with noble warmth and earnestness to preserve their own home for the orphans by appointing me to the vicarage. I did not know that he had disregarded the fatigue of the long journey by night, and, in spite of remonstrances from his wife, had mounted his horse very soon after his return, and had ridden over to salute me with the title which I had received so ungraciously.

"Don't utter a word of thanks," he continued, waving his whip towards me: "the thing isn't worth thanking him for, or me either."

"But, my dear Sir," said I, at last able to edge in a word, "my fellowship! I cannot hold a living without vacating it; to vacate it is, of course, out of the question."

He put down the little girl, and gave a long whistle. A shade of great disappointment and vexation came over his pleasant face. "I forgot that," said he: "bless my soul, how unlucky! what are we to do now?"

He stood before the fire, and fixed his eyes on a small case of insects which we had hung, picture-fashion, on the wall. He crossed the room to this miniature museum, and examined it for full two minutes in silence.

"We really must contrive it somehow," said he, turning round briskly at last: "you really mustn't leave Inglethwaite."

I saw the immense advantages of the offer as plainly as he did. The thought that those little ones might remain in their own familiar dwelling was almost too delightful to be realized. Yet, small as was the income of Inglethwaite, it exceeded the limits assigned by the College statutes to benefices tenable with a fellowship; and without the fellowship, it would have been sheer madness to attempt the charge of the orphans.

At last he said, "I think I have it; but I must consult Mrs. Archdeacon,"—(this with some return of hilarity); "I'll go and see what she thinks about the matter." He left the room with a gravity which contrasted strongly with the boisterous cheerfulness of his entrance. After he had quitted the house, he came to the window outside, and cried through the glass, "I really believe I've hit it; I do indeed. Don't be in a hurry about the sale." And he disappeared.

I saw no more of him that day; and I passed the remainder of it in a very restless and unsettled mood. I walked up and down in the garden, not daring to go far from home, lest the Archdeacon should return:

and every time I passed the little plot of ground dignified by the name of "Herby's garden," I felt the desire strengthened of retaining the dwelling, hallowed by so many associations, for the orphans. My walk led me continually to and from the gate near the churchyard, and it is not strange that my thoughts recurred often to the time when I first saw Herbert, leaning on his rake, and to the subsequent occasion, when I first passed that wicket, conversing with his mother. These recollections brought a calm over my troubled spirit. The soothing assurance came to my relief, that He who orders all our goings would direct this matter for our good. He had guided me thither; He had pointed out a field of work for me; He had made me feel that in that work there was a true happiness and a rich reward, which selfish and idle amusement had never been able to secure to me: and now I was sure, if He saw fit to approve this plan for His servant, He would open a way for its accomplishment.

As the twilight deepened, I gave up all hope of the Archdeacon's return; and with a lightened heart I set myself to amuse the two elder children by making imitations of boats and other objects in folded paper. And when Emily had been summoned to bed, I told Herbert a story. He sat on a footstool, with his arms on my knee, and his chin on his hands; and thus, gazing intently on my face, he listened breathlessly to a rough sketch, marvellously abridged, of Mr. Dickens' thrilling narrative, "Oliver Twist." Then he re-

peated his prayers. There was no mention now of "papa" or "mamma," but there was a petition for a blessing on his brothers and sisters, and that he might always be kind to them. There were those who prayed for him, dear, gentle child ! when angels stood around his little cot, whispering to him of his mother.

After breakfast next day, an old-fashioned carriage, drawn by a pair of fat horses, rumbled over the stones of the village street, and stopped at the parsonage. Out of it jumped the Archdeacon, and after him got out, with great care, the old lady his wife. A glance revealed the contrast between the pair, and the very decided influence which the lady exercised over the dignitary. She wore a bonnet of most antique type, and was so muffled up in furs and shawls, (though the carriage was closed,) that she looked like a moving bundle of miscellaneous clothing. She was very gracious, however ; and when she entered the comfortable and roomy dining-room, she said in an undertone to her husband, " I declare, this is not amiss !"

The Archdeacon, who hated all kinds of deception and secrecy, broke out at once : " I knew you would like 'it ! It's all right, my dear Sir !—James, don't put up the horses, we needn't stay !—Hurra ! upon my word, it's a far better notion than the other !" and he was running on, when his wife struck in with, " Stop, stop, you won't let us say a word !—Excuse me, Mr. M., but can I see the whole house ?"

I summoned the housekeeper, and she escorted the

old lady from the room. The moment the door was closed, the Archdeacon came close to me, and speaking low, said, "You may consider the whole matter as arranged, only of course ladies like to appear particular. Don't you guess what we are thinking of?" I shook my head. "Why," said he, tapping my arm with his finger, "you know I only hold a stall in Riverton Cathedral with my archdeaconry,—no other preferment. We often wish we had a little country place for a month or two in the summer: now, why shouldn't *I* hold this little cure, (if the earl has no objection,) and ask you to be the curate? Consider, when we come here for our sojourn, you could go to Riverton, and the little girls can get a bit of musical teaching from Dr. Boyce, our organist."

He saw by my face that I was delighted, and almost overpowered, by the kind scheme. "You see," he continued, "there's another convenience in it. Of course, we can't live in the house without furniture, that's quite clear. Furniture won't bear moving,—a removal's worse than a fire;—we'll take this, as it stands, at a valuation. There needn't be any trouble about it."

How I revered that noble old man! and how deeply grateful I felt to God, who had raised up such a friend for us! I thanked our benefactor fervently; and hastening from the room, I thanked God also. Then I could not refrain from seeking out Herbert, and I almost frightened him by my exuberant expressions of delight. "Only think, Herbert," I said, "we are to

stay here, and not to go away at all, except now and then for a little while ! And we are to keep all dear papa's things, and all mamma's plants, and the piano, and the books !" He caught my tone of happiness, and gave several little jumps of joy.

The old lady soon returned ; and though she made no remark, in my presence, on the house or its appurtenances, her face wore a benignant expression ; and the couple drove away, leaving me happier and more tranquil than I had yet been since the terrible events which had brought desolation on so many hearts. In a few days the Archdeacon wrote to me, enclosing a letter to himself from Lord Hartlebury. The earl wrote to his old acquaintance in a tone of good-humoured banter, rallying him on his cupidity in craving the wealthy benefice of Inglethwaite, and rebuking with mock severity his "cruelty" in preventing its presentation to a poor curate, (myself). He ended by warmly expressing approval of the kind scheme, adding a courteous message to me.

All the necessary arrangements were soon made : the Archdeacon was installed as vicar, and I was duly re-appointed curate ; the contents of the house were valued, and were promptly purchased by the Archdeacon. Every claim against Mr. Falconer's estate was satisfied, and a balance invested for the children.

CHAPTER XI.

ALTHOUGH I considered it a duty, not less sacred than welcome, to carry out my deceased friend's wishes to the letter by undertaking the guardianship of his children, I deemed it only prudent to enquire whether any of their mother's relations were living, and were in a position to befriend the little ones. I felt very seriously the importance and responsibility of the charge which I had undertaken. Especially I foresaw the absolute necessity of some judicious arrangements for the two little girls. If any female relative could be found to supply to them the place of a mother, one of my chief anxieties would be removed.

With the aid of Mr. Deedes, I discovered that Mrs. Falconer had been the only child by the second marriage of her father to a young person, formerly a governess in his family. Much unhappiness had ensued from this second marriage: the elder sons and daughters had never noticed their father's wife,—a timid and gentle creature,—and when she died, in giving birth to a daughter, her death was unmourned by anyone save her husband, and the attendant to whom her sweet gentleness had endeared her. The babe, however, was not allowed to want a friend. One of its aunts—one who had been among the most unrelenting in unkindness to the mother—took charge of it, and reared it with tenderness. Perhaps her con-

science smote her, when she saw no longer the unoffending object of her aversion ; at any rate, she bestowed on the child of her brother an affection which she had denied to his wife ; and when he was gathered to his fathers, she promised to be the protectress of his little girl. A fatality, however, had seemed to attend this family ; or, it may be, happiness and peace were denied to those who strove not to cultivate the graces of gentleness and forbearance. The aunt was ambitious and worldly ; and as her niece grew up and gave promise of much beauty, she indulged herself with schemes of a brilliant marriage. Her vexation knew no bounds when Henry Falconer, then a young curate, declared his attachment to her ward ; forgetting the misery which had ensued from a previous interference of the same kind—or, perhaps, (for so we deceive ourselves,) fancying that she was protecting her niece from the error into which her father had fallen,—she absolutely forbade their union ; and when, with the ardour of a true and mutual affection, they refused to break the vows which they had pledged to one another, she declared she would never see them more. After their marriage, indeed, when the tidings reached her of the rich uncle's promises, she had relented, and had even written to her niece in a tone mistaken for kindness ; but no other advance had been made towards a reconciliation when she died.

The children of the first marriage, two sons and a daughter, had never even recognised their half-sister as

a relative. I found that both the sons had died, (they were past the middle age when Mrs. Falconer was born,) and that the daughter survived, and was married to a London merchant.

To this gentleman I wrote immediately, acquainting him with the melancholy fate of his wife's near relatives. I was proceeding to describe the forlorn position of the orphans, and to crave sympathy for them, when an unaccountable repugnance to the course which I was pursuing stayed my hand. I tore up the paper and wrote again a simply courteous letter, announcing the death of the parents, and adding that I had taken charge of the orphan children.

The next day's post brought an answer, written from a counting-house in the city, and in a style truly business-like. It ran as follows:—

"Birchin-lane,
"March —, 18—.

"REV. SIR,

"I am in receipt of yours of the 10th inst., for which I am obliged.

"We had been advised of the death of the Rev. H. and Mrs. Falconer.

"Referring to your intelligence respecting the children, we cannot admit that they have any claim on us, especially as the late Mrs. Falconer's fortune was settled on them.

"Mrs. Brown wishes me to add, that although it must always be painful to her to be reminded of her

late father's ill-advised marriage, she is willing to exert herself to procure suitable situations for the girls when they prove themselves deserving of her notice."

"I am, Rev. Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"W. CLOSE BROWN.

"The Rev. R—— M——."

I crumpled up this precious epistle and tossed it into the fire: however, after a moment's reflection, I rescued it from the flames and re-perused it; finally, I put it carefully aside with other papers.

The Archdeacon had strongly advised me to insert an advertisement relative to the West Indian letter received by Mrs. Falconer, which was lost with her in the "St. Laurence," in the public prints of the colony. He himself brought all his shrewd judgment to bear on the cautious wording of this advertisement, and after numerous alterations, it was sent to the agents of the "Jamaica Times" in the following form:—

"Rosa, who wrote in July last to Mrs. F—— in England, is earnestly requested to be a friend to six motherless little ones, by explaining herself more fully to the Archdeacon of R.," &c.

And now the happiest years of my life began to roll tranquilly on. The advancing spring found us all calmly settled in the parsonage: Mrs. Johnson, proud and happy in the care of the children; 'Liza, active and as ever in the motley duties of the house; ho-

nest Ralph, the parish-clerk, the presiding guardian of flowers and fruit-trees; Herbert, the diligent collector of specimens of the insect tribe, in all stages of their short-lived existence, from chrysalis to painted butterfly. On Sundays, (as I had for many months been the officiating minister,) the church would have reminded us but little of our loss, if the silence of the organ, and the rudeness of the now untutored singing, had not brought to our sorrowful recollection the loved one whose skilful touch and patient teaching had given beauty to the work of praise. I encouraged little Emily to look forward to this office as a delightful memorial of her mother; and the child would colour with joyful anticipation, and yet with modest dread, of the time for entrance on her musical duties. For the present, however, she was too young to require any teaching beyond the humble lessons given her by a young person in the village who had been a nursery governess, and now attended an aged mother. She was escorted to the cottage every day by little Frank, a sturdy fellow about five years of age, whose own career was not destined to be literary, if any augury could be drawn from his present determined antipathy to book and slate.

In Herbert I began to find a companion as well as a pupil. He had recovered the merry cheerfulness natural to his years, but the great grief had thrown a sober hue over his merriment. Or it may have been, that, brought more into contact with him, I noticed, more than I had previously done, the quiet

thoughtfulness which appeared even in his merriest hours.

I should be sorry to convey the impression that Herbert was a child of precocious talent, or of a gravity beyond his years: I had never thought his abilities such as to excite remark, and my first impressions were quite confirmed by subsequent closer observation. Herbert had fair natural abilities; he was fond of poring over a book, (especially if it were illustrated by engravings,) but the mastery of any new subject of study cost him a considerable effort; and a teacher who allowed him to acquiesce readily in the truth of a proposition without understanding its proof, would have expended pains in vain on Herbert. Certainly, he was graver and more thoughtful than many boys of his age: the cloud of early grief, as I have said, may have veiled the sunshine of that young heart; but I incline to the belief that his mind was cast by nature in a thoughtful mould, and that the society of persons older than himself, and the discussion of subjects more suited to their comprehension than to his own, would ever have had charms for Herbert superior to those of the companionship and conversation of children like himself. True, he would romp with his little brothers in the garden; but he would tire of the game ere long, and a soft voice would be heard outside my window, asking Mr. M—— “to let him come in now, and sit quietly with him.” I did not always grant the request. A healthy love of out-door play should always be fostered in boys.

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And when immediate admission was denied to him, he would run away cheerfully, and in another moment would be driving Frank, an imaginary pony rampant, up and down the long walk as merrily as before.

In truth, if brilliant talents were withheld from Herbert, he was gifted with a sweetness of temper which more than atoned for their absence. In all my experience, I never met with a disposition so unselfish. Looking back over the past, as I now do, and recalling into the strong light of vivid recollection the every-day occurrences, great and small, of his childhood, I cannot bring to mind a single instance of peevishness or ill-humour. I have known many cases, since those days, of winning gentleness and docility in young persons, but never have I met with such a temper as Herbert's. No one ever saw that fair brow clouded by anger; no glance, save of gentle affection or wistful petition, ever beamed from that clear blue eye.

Who could help loving this child, on whom Heaven had bestowed these its best gifts? who could help feeling tenderly drawn towards this fatherless boy, on whom a parent's duties must devolve?

I feared that I should love him too dearly. I dreaded the complete surrender of the whole affections to this orphan child committed to my care. Yet, if I allowed any coldness—nay, any diminution of warmth—to appear in my manner towards him, the tenderness of the child soon rebuked the attempt. As if fearful that he had offended me, he would re-

double his little winning acts of kindness. He would replenish, in my absence, the vases of spring-flowers on my table. On coming in at dusk, I should find my chair wheeled to the fire, a little table near it, with the book or newspaper. And when he crept in after my evening meal, he would nestle on the hearth-rug, and gazing on the mysteries of the glowing coals, would put all my dexterity to the proof by innumerable queries growing out of, or branching off from, the topics of the day.

No one, who has not made proof of such a companionship as this, can have any idea of the charm which attends it. It must never be thought that the mind of the elder person does not find full exercise in such intercourse. The questions of an intelligent child will afford abundant room for the employment of the highest intellectual power in answering them. The child's retentive memory is quick in the detection of any inconsistency with answers formerly given ; his perfect purity and innocence impose a constant check on the explanation of events which come to his knowledge both in the page of past history, and in the experience of every-day life ; his simple reverence and infant faith are a continual warning to the teacher to speak with caution of the deep mysteries which underlie the whole structure of religion.

The hours spent in desultory converse with such a boy as Herbert are not wasted hours,—are wasted neither by the child nor the man.

And I am far from sure that even a father's affec-

tion for his son can be stronger than the affection which springs up between a teacher who really makes his work a labour of love, and the scholar who hangs upon his words, and builds all his faith on the foundation which he lays. Parental and filial affection is a thing of course. Its absence shocks us, its excess provokes a smile. There is nothing in its ordinary development to remind us of its existence. The other affection—that of the master and his scholar—is not a thing of course; nay, it is rare. And when it is allowed full play, it enchains the heart with a bond (as I have said) but a little less powerful than that which connects the parent and child.

If, as in my own case, the position and duties of a parent are superadded to those of teacher, I cannot imagine any circumstances more calculated to elicit strong and lasting affection.

Our conversations often led us by gradual and imperceptible degrees to the subject of his parents' death,—a subject which I never avoided. He was, of course, much too young to understand the circumstances which had led to the disastrous voyage;—I dreaded the time when his pure mind must be sullied with the details of his uncle's conduct; but already I accustomed him to think of his father as one who had perished in the discharge of a duty; no mere pleasure, I tried to make him understand, had been the object of that voyage which had made him an orphan.

He would gaze into the fire for some time when the conversation took this turn; and after a long pause

he would often rise and go to his bed, as if no other topic were worthy to succeed that cherished one. But one evening, instead of retiring, he drew a chair close to mine, and said, "Mr. M——, may I ask you something?" (I always braced myself for a difficulty when this request was made.)

"Yes, dear."

"Doesn't God always hear us when we say our prayers?"

"To be sure He does,—always."

"Well, Emmy and I read to you yesterday, that 'if two people agree to ask for something, God will give it to them.' But He didn't save papa and mamma from the dangers of the sea, though we all asked Him to. You did, I know. Didn't He hear us?"

"My boy," I answered, after a short pause, "I shall always tell you when I cannot at once answer your questions plainly; and now I tell you that I cannot explain why God did not grant our prayers. I am sure He heard them. I do not pretend to understand all God's thoughts: I am too little and ignorant for that."

"Too little, Mr. M.! why, you're quite grown up!"

"What do we call God, dear, when we say our prayers to Him?"

"Our Father," said he, softly.

"And does a father tell his little boy his reasons r all he does or thinks? For instance, did your

dear papa tell you why he was going to the West Indies, and why he could not take you with him? No; he did not tell you, because you were too little, and are too little yet, to understand all about it. He was very sorry to leave his pets behind him, and grieve them by going away from them; but he had good reasons, which they could not enter into. Now, do you see what I am coming to in saying all this?"

"Yes; you mean that God won't tell us His reasons."

"Because we could not understand them. You know that you and I are both His children, though I am grown up, and you are a little boy. I say 'Our Father,' as well as you. And neither of us can tell why Almighty God saw fit not to grant our prayers for the safe return of dear papa and mamma."

He thought for a moment; so did I. And in that moment I doubted if I had answered him wisely.

I continued at once, "But consider, Herbert, did God not grant our prayers? What did we say to Him, after all?"

He involuntarily put his hands together, as he said, "Pray God bless dear papa and mamma, and keep them from the dangers of the sea."

"Well, my darling," I rejoined, "surely God has blessed dear papa and mamma. They have gone to be with God for ever. All their cares and troubles are over now." I could scarcely control my agitation, when I thought of the conversation, in that very room, which had unfolded to me the whole sad tale

of care and of trouble now over. I was strongly tempted to speak of the "dangers of the sea" in a figurative sense;—they were indeed saved from the dangers of that sea of trouble which had well-nigh engulfed them;—but I knew the child had not used the phrase in any figurative sense in his simple prayer, and I only said, "They are safe from all dangers of the sea now, dear; they can never be in danger again: they have landed safely on the eternal shore. We must go to them when our time comes. Therefore God has heard our prayers, and has granted them, but not in the very way we wished. He has blessed papa and mamma very much, and He will shew us that we are blessed too, if we try to do our duty, as they did. And now go to your bed, my child." He put up his face to be kissed, and left the room.

"The blessing of the Almighty rest on him," I inwardly exclaimed, as I followed him with my eyes to the door: "May God help him in the voyage which he, too, must make, across life's turbulent sea! He little knows its 'dangers,' poor innocent."

CHAPTER XII.

It has been often observed that the mind, in its healthy and normal state, loves the repose of monotony rather than the excitement of change. The craving for variety is a morbid craving, which results from misuse of time and neglect of duty: just as the pampered appetite of the epicure ceases at last to relish plain food, and longs for dainties ever new, so the life of one who has allowed pleasure to usurp the place which duty should fill, becomes intolerable when an uniform daily round of quiet occupations is substituted for the exciting enjoyments of thoughtless dissipation.

In its healthy and unspoiled state, I repeat, the mind loves monotony.

Everyone has noticed how rapidly time passes when the everyday life of home is unchequered by stirring events. It is like a voyage on an untracked ocean, with no note of time, and no observation of the stars;—one long day, in which by some accident the clock has ceased to tell the hours;—one long chapter of history, in which no marginal date reminds us of the succession of years.

On the other hand, the march of time seems to be retarded by any event which breaks in upon the tranquil daily life. A week at the sea-side,—a visit from some stranger,—an annual festivity,—these are

epochs from which we measure the lapse of time, and in our measurement are surprised by its slowness.

Our days at Inglethwaite were marked by little variety, and truly we desired none. Week after week passed rapidly away ; high summer was over, and autumnal colours began to vary the landscape, but no change of season affected much the even tenor of our lives. For me, this tranquil existence had a charm quite indescribable. My old restlessness was gone. If I ever cast a longing eye towards the sunny lands in which I had intended to spend this very autumn, it was met by the thought that home-life at Inglethwaite would be ill exchanged for the fatigues of a tour among strangers.

Our day began by a visit to the village school, whither Herbert would accompany me, and where he would answer with the rest in the catechising. Then we returned home by the other way, through the fields, and he sat steadily at his lessons until his mid-day meal. The afternoon was devoted to a walk ; and if a few visits to the cottages were combined with it, all the better pleased was Herbert. The kind people of Inglethwaite were never tired of noticing their lost pastor's boy ; and never were my visits more welcome to them, than when he accompanied me. They could not have defined their feelings, good, honest folk ; nor is it necessary that I should do so, though the temptation is great. My readers may see for themselves an illustration of the axiom that "Pity is akin to love ;" and may reason, if they please, on

the deeper mystery, that Reverence is awakened towards one on whom Grief has laid her hand heavily, even though that one be a child, unconscious of the stroke.

I rather think, too, that in Herbert the good people fancied they beheld their future pastor; and that the result of this idea was a kind of pride closely allied to that which is felt by a Scotch clan in the heir of their lord, or by the warm-hearted tar in the diminutive middy who will one day command him.

At any rate, there was not a cottager in Inglethwaite whose face did not beam with pleasure when Herbert's light step was heard on the threshold; and many a mother's eye was turned on him with an expression which spoke a blessing more eloquently than words.

Sometimes, on Frank's half-holidays, that young gentleman was permitted to accompany us in our walk. There were some extensive fir-woods not far from the village, which had been planted, many years before, on a piece of heathy, waste land. The trees stood in long, regular rows, forming vistas like the aisles of a cathedral, closed in above by a vaulting of dark green branches, and paved with the withered spines and fallen cones, interspersed in patches with sparse grass, straggling ferns, and quantities of the delicate lichen which loves such situations. It was a high treat to the boys to spend a summer's afternoon in these plantations. While I was absorbed in my book, they would wander far from me, and their merry voices would echo through the long alleys as

they chased the squirrels from tree to tree, or pelted each other with the fir-cones. Then a sudden, deep silence would proclaim the discovery of some beetle or pupa new to Herbert, and in a moment they would be running towards me with the treasure.

"A siege" was great fun. Herbert would undertake to defend one of the sandy ramparts which enclosed the wood; Frank was to make good his entrance, if possible. It was amusing to witness the strength and pertinacity with which the stout little assailant would rush up the bank, butting the enemy with his head, or striving to hurl him down with his twining arms. Shouts of laughter resounded through the wood as one or both of the combatants rolled unhurt into the dry ditch, padded with old leaves and bushy ferns.

Sobered at last by sheer fatigue, we would wend our way homeward, crossing the brook at the fish-trap, and pausing to watch the trout, as they glided with the speed of the arrow from one deep pool to another; and on our return the little ones would greet us, all clean and radiant, charmed to spend an hour in the drawing-room, until summoned by their nurse. Herbert's evening I have described.

Those were happy days, indeed. The cold world seemed shut out from us. If vexation or trouble made their appearance in our neighbourhood, they found no admittance within the parsonage. Of course, little storms now and then agitated the atmosphere of the nursery, but they were transient. Master Frank's like temperament needed occasional curbing, but

he had not arrived at the age of bold rebellion. If Herbert became somewhat dreamy over his *Delectus*, a word reproved him; and if that word were repeated, the tears would gather in his eye, and he would beg me to pardon his inattention.

The later autumn, however, brought a great event upon us—our removal to Riverton. The Archdeacon, I am convinced, would have been glad to have been spared his three months' residence at Inglethwaite during the cold season of the year; but with the delicate consideration for others which marked his whole character, he desired to give me the pleasure and benefit of a temporary change of scene. I had passed through a very trying period; and the distress and excitement had produced an effect upon my health which the tranquil summer had not quite availed to remove. Besides, the kind old man failed in concealing his wish that we should be absent from Inglethwaite on the anniversary of the awful event which had had an influence so mighty and so terrible on the fortunes of my youthful charge.

He had persuaded his wife, therefore, to consent to a winter sojourn in his new cure; and now we were to remove to his comfortable residence in the Close at Riverton. The excellent old lady made many stipulations, and exacted many conditions, as the price of her acquiescence in the plan: the Archdeacon forgot to mention them to me.

The most important of these, however, were soon explained by Mrs. Rawson, the Archdeacon's house-

keeper, who remained on the spot to enforce their observance. With a face on which severe dignity sat conspicuous, she made known to me her mistress' commands that "the children" were on no account to go into the drawing-room or dining-room, or to use the front stairs, with much more to the same effect, which I do not care to remember. I promised obedience, but was extremely amused, on the very next day, by the coolness, or rather by the warmth, with which the arrangement was set aside by the master of the house. He had ridden over from Inglethwaite, (he did so, by the way, almost daily during our sojourn,) and found me alone in the large dining-room, which looked deserted and comfortless. "Holloa," he exclaimed, "all alone! How's this? Children not ill, I hope?"

I reminded him of the rule, adding some civil words of acquiescence in its propriety.

"Pooh, pooh! nonsense!" said the dignitary, quite incensed, and ringing the bell. "Why, Rawson, what stuff is this? I suppose the nurse puts clean shoes on the children, and washes their hands, eh? Keep the ink out of their way, and what harm can they do? All stuff. Let's hear no more of it!" So the children had the run of the house; but the little ones found abundance of amusement in playing at "hide and seek" in the long passages and dark closets and recesses of the attics; while Herbert, as quiet as a mouse, sat by me as usual in the Archdeacon's library, crossed by a magnificent work on insects, with

large coloured engravings. I encouraged him to copy some of these engravings with his pencil, and when I saw the freedom and spirit which he threw into his drawings, (imperfect though they necessarily were,) the idea occurred to me that this strong taste for natural history might be turned to account, and should, at any rate, be fostered and cultivated. I inwardly resolved to procure a microscope for him, and I regretted my own ignorance of entomology, which precluded me from rendering him any real assistance in the use of it.

No doubt, public education possesses many advantages over private tuition; but the private tutor can often wield a power from which routine and stern discipline debar the schoolmaster. A special gift or talent—unless it be in close affinity to the one great study of the public school—can seldom or ever be brought into exercise there. One rigorous law compels all to labour at the dead languages, while the special talents bestowed by Providence lie hidden, or are cultivated by stealth. That this is a great evil, I unhesitatingly declare; that it is an evil inherent in a public school system, may fairly be questioned. If “education” be truly a “drawing forth” of the powers (often latent) of the youthful mind, surely our great seminaries should provide labour for the exercise of all those powers, given bountifully by Nature: yet the administrators of our public school system aim at the educing of one power only, that of mastering the difficulties of language; and if they fail

in this, if this one faculty be wanting, they throw aside the scholar as unworthy of notice, though his mind may be very capable of exhibiting powers of a high order in another field of human knowledge.

"When I was at school," said the Archdeacon one day, as we were discussing this point, "there was a boy in the same class with me who was continually in disgrace. He could not, for the life of him, make good Latin verses. His Latin verses were dreadful, really. Well! on the occasion of some public event—the peace, or something, I forget what—all the boys were to write an ode in English verse. When we handed up our attempts, 'the dunce' had outshone us all! He had written a clever and original composition; it was incomparably the best: the master was delighted. Yet, will you believe it? that boy was never again told to write English verse! No; the rules of the school tied him to Latin verse; and at Latin verse he was doomed to toil, with tears very commonly on his cheek, until he left the school without honour or credit. Now, Sir, that boy was called a dunce because he lacked facility in mastering the rules of a dead language; yet the boy had considerable intellectual power: besides a turn for English verse and prose writing, he was exceedingly ingenious as a mechanic, and he had a delicate ear and refined taste in music. The school-system dubbed him a dunce!"

"Certainly," I said, "the private tutor is too often wed to be the only educator, in the strict sense of

that word. He can discover and foster the peculiar talent of each boy under his care; and while he requires all to labour at the elevating study of language or science, he may help each to cultivate the gifts by which, probably, he is to glorify the Giver."

"To be sure," said the dignitary. "The private tutor would have made my schoolfellow paper a whole room over with English odes and lyrics, and set them to music afterwards, and play them on a lyre of his own invention and construction!" And he laughed merrily.

I sent that day for the microscope.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE advertisement which we had inserted in the West Indian newspapers had never been answered. It was plainly our duty, however, to leave no means untried for the recovery of the estates, or, at least, for the establishment of the children's title to them; and after much anxious consideration, I resolved, with the advice and concurrence of Mr. Deedes, to employ an experienced detective officer to make enquiries on the spot. He sailed for Port Royal in December; but his mission added little to our stock of information. He reported on his return that the plantations of Blue Hills, near Kingston, were held by Mr. Philip Falconer, who had always been recognised as the lawful owner. The Creole lady, his mother, had been

long dead ; and mortality had thinned the ranks of her once numerous family.

Of course, we had instructed the officer to make himself acquainted with the writer of the mysterious letter to Mrs. Falconer ; and it now appeared that " Rosa " was the wife of Mr. Philip Falconer ; at least, she was so regarded at Blue Hills. Report said that the planter was a man of cruel and violent disposition, to the last degree unscrupulous and revengeful. He was a gambler, it was added, and was supposed to be deeply involved in debt. The officer had heard confident predictions that the estates would come to the hammer at no distant period, if the reckless course of their master were continued.

Mr. Deedes took the opinion of counsel on the case as it now presented itself, and we received no encouragement to commence proceedings founded on it. The barrister assured him that even in England it would be difficult to collect evidence sufficient to justify the commencement of a suit against the present possessor of the plantations : in Jamaica, where the registration of marriages was most defective, the difficulty would be wholly insuperable. We gave up all hope, and ceased to turn our thoughts to the subject.

The Archdeacon's residence stood on one side of the Cathedral Close. It was an old-fashioned brick mansion, with a formal garden-plot in front of it, shut in by high iron gates, from which a paved walk led to the principal entrance. The windows commanded a full view of the cathedral, which at Riverton is not

hemmed in by surrounding buildings, but may be seen in all its majestic grandeur from every side save one, on which the garden-wall of the bishop's palace forbids approach.

I abstain, for obvious reasons, from describing the cathedral minutely. Its interior had not (at the period of which I write) received that skilful and reverent adornment and restoration which has been since effected; but its vast dimensions astonished and impressed the young visitors who entered it for the first time under my guidance.

Herbert was not naturally gifted with much musical taste, but he was greatly delighted by the cathedral service. Whatever may be urged by the advocates of stern simplicity in religious worship, it can scarcely be denied that the musical ritual of the Church of England has the power of fixing the attention and winning the love of the young. Remembering, as I well did, the astonishment and delight with which I myself, when a child, first heard the chanting of the Liturgy, I was not surprised at the effect produced on my little companions, whose admiration was unbounded. Even Frank was impressed, and confided to his sister a burning desire to become one of the "little boys in white frocks," and sing "those pretty hymns."

On the Sunday, the choir of the cathedral was crowded by an overflowing congregation. The bench immediately before that on which we sat was occupied by a row of schoolboys, headed by a grave-look-

ing usher: I concluded that these were the boys of the King's School, which enjoyed at that time a considerable celebrity. (The buildings were on the opposite side of the Close; and behind them—the playground only intervening—flowed the broad stream which gives its designation to the city.)

I had noticed the manly bearing and intelligent countenance of the tallest of these grammar-school boys; and had observed, also, that he cast several furtive glances at us during the service. When we left the church, we found him waiting for us in the porch; he came up with outstretched hand, and with heightened colour said, "Why, Falconer! how are you?"

Herbert took the hand shyly, and replied that he was very well, shrinking back immediately to my side.

"My name is Morley," said the youth to me, somewhat embarrassed, but with a well-bred consciousness that some introduction to me was necessary: "my father knew Mr. Falc—" he hesitated and stammered,—“knew Inglethwaite well. I'm at the King's School." And then wishing Herbert "Good morning," he ran off, as if glad to escape.

"Who is he, Herby?" said I.

"Oh, I like him very much," said Herbert, by way of answer. "He's often been over to play with us. Oh, such kites he can make! And he can hit anything with a stone, ever so far off!"

"Well, but where does he live, and who is his father?"

END

"His father!" repeated the child simply; "why, he's a gentleman. He lives at Morley-hall. And oh! Mr. M——, there's a boat on the lake; and once when we were there, we found a swan's nest among the sedge! And they've made a real, proper wigwam, —large enough to live in, you know—on the island! Oh! I like Morley-hall, and I like Arthur!"

I was glad to hear this. The society of an elder boy might be of great service to Herbert. I invited young Morley on the next half-holiday; and he soon became one of our circle on all occasions when the rules of the school permitted his presence with us.

Herbert evidently regarded him as a being of a most superior order; but it was entertaining to me, a bystander, to mark the great contrast between them, and to observe the real superiority, in all important respects, of the younger boy.

Arthur's whole soul was bound up in the bold sports of the playground, and especially in the noble game of cricket. He could talk of cricket by the hour: he knew the names, and the best "scores," of all the principal players of the day. His face would flush with excitement as he rose from his chair to illustrate with suitable action the history of the match between the Riverton Eleven and Twenty-two of Dockborough. He would explain, with laborious exactness, the way in which Tom Dodd was "out," and would grow indignant as he recounted the proceedings which ensued, when the "Dockborough Snobs," overjoyed by their victory, insulted all the "Riverton

fellows" they met in the streets. At Herbert's request, Arthur brought his best bat, in its green-baize covering, for our inspection; and an expression of ludicrous awe and reverence sat on the little boy's face as the young cricketer put himself into the attitude of the batsman, and swung his favourite weapon in the air.

If wondering respect were readily accorded by the child, the position of patron was willingly taken up by the youth. He evidently commiserated the ignorance and simplicity of Herbert. He checked the half-uttered exclamation of impatience, and with a droll glance at me, would try to bring down his conversation to the level of Herbert's capacity.—

"You see, Mr. M., we were playing a match against the choristers. Young Green was in,—that fellow that sang the anthem on Sunday, you know;—Green was in; I was keeping wicket. Dick Tomkins was bowling. Dick sends awful shooters, I can tell you! Well, little Green was very nervous, ran out to every ball: thinks I, my boy, I have you! The very next time, sure enough, I stumped him!"

"Stumped him!" repeated Herbert, with a horrified expression.

"Of course, you little — oh, I beg your pardon, you don't know cricket!" And then he sat down to shew Herbert on the table what "stumping" is, and what the "popping-crease" is, and how little Green was out of his ground, "though he swore he wasn't, unung thief! He's always looked black at me ever

since. He sings at me in church, I declare he does. I'll thump him some day,—see if I don't."

For my own part, I was greatly amused by this youngster, who infused quite a new element into our quiet home life. And I was not sorry to see that Herbert gradually imbibed some of the reverence for courage and activity which formed so large an ingredient in the character of our new acquaintance. It was not the season for cricket, but foot-ball flourished at Riverton School, and I often led Herbert to the playground to witness the game. Then Arthur was seen in his glory; and any distinguished success on his part would delight his little admirer, who clung to me, nevertheless, with a grip which told very plainly that an invitation to him to join in the game would be promptly declined.

I should certainly not have pressed him to accept it, though I am far from undervaluing the playground as a useful agent in the business of the school.

Sometimes the young athlete would pay us the compliment of forsaking the playground to accompany us in a walk. A walk, I call it; but with him, it was a succession of gymnastic exercises; every gate a vaulting-bar, and every hedge a high leap.

There was one beautiful walk which we often took. Skirting the wall of the playground, we came at once upon the river, at a part where it flowed somewhat lazily over a sandy bottom, affording an excellent bathing-place for *little* boys, Arthur said, contemptuously. It soon made a rapid bend to the

right, forming a deep and dark pool, above which rose a rocky bank crested with trees. A small streamlet fell from this rock into the river. We gained the foot of the rock by a narrow path close to the deep water; and we should have been stopped by the precipitous face, if the roots of the trees above had not formed a very singular ladder, or series of natural ropes, up which it was not difficult to clamber. Arthur mounted these natural ladders in a moment; and with a little encouragement, Herbert soon overcame his timidity, and stood on the summit, proud of his achievement. The walk led us on through woods—bare, indeed, at this season, but in summer of rare beauty—to the ruins of an abbey, seated on a rich meadow near the river. Herbert began to ask questions about the buildings, and the old monks who reared them: but Arthur left us, and was soon hallooing to us from among the ivy on the highest point of the old dining-hall, or refectory. In another moment he was standing, at a giddy height, on a little arch which hung suspended over the mill-stream, which ran beneath the ruins. I should really have feared for his safety, if I had not remembered well the mad pranks of my own school-days.

A process of gradual assimilation goes on when two characters, still pliant and unformed, are brought into frequent contact. Herbert, as I have said, certainly gained from Arthur a love of manly activity and courage: and no thoughtful reader will be surprised to learn that the unconscious and almost imperceptible

influence of the little boy's gentleness and docility produced an effect on the bold youth. The attraction of two bodies, philosophers tell us, is mutual. Though the earth's attraction holds the moon in her orbit, yet the moon herself exerts a humble attracting power over the vast bulk of earth. Little Herbert, modest and humble, seemed to revolve around the bolder spirit as the centre of his childish system; but the planet himself was gently drawn towards his satellite, and the observer, with his eye at the telescope, saw with interest the minute changes on the disc of each.

Arthur became tolerant of the rage for collecting beetles. True, he could not restrain a little occasional badinage: he would capture some common insect, and bring it with mock gravity to Herbert, saying, "Look here! What's this, eh? Rather a stunner! *Dytiscus Marginalis*, eh?" with a great deal more of such nonsense. But he no longer threw the insect into Herbert's face, or pretended to cram it under his shirt-collar. Nay, if he were with us in the evening, he would even condescend to examine the microscope, and compare a few specimens with the engravings in the book. And when, in all simplicity, the little boy learnedly answered his bantering enquiries, he would pat him on the shoulder, and say, with an odd mixture of real admiration and affected superiority, "What a young humbug you are, Herbert! You'll be a professor some day!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Archdeacon and his lady were charmed with Inglethwaite. The house, I have hinted, was commodious ; it had been erected soon after Mr. Falconer had succeeded to the vicarage, and the expenses of its erection had contributed to his unhappy embarrassments.

The kind-hearted old gentleman found most congenial employment in visiting the country-folk, whose affection was soon gained by his easy and familiar manner ; and his afternoon ride to Riverton gave him invigorating exercise, while it kept him fully informed of all the little occurrences of the place ; in which, to say truth, the curiosity and interest of the good Archdeacon were not surpassed by those of his wife. His health, he declared, had never been so good ; while "Mrs. Archdeacon" really found the Inglethwaite drawing-room warmer than that at Riverton.

The numberless hints which he threw out on the subject prepared me, at last, for the proposition that we should remain permanently in our present quarters.

"I don't deny," said he, "that we like Inglethwaite, and that the kind of life which we are now leading suits us well. My wife has taken quite a fancy to the place, and dreads returning to stiff dinner-parties in the Close. I can be at the afternoon cathedral service every day, if I like ; and my three months'

residence may be contrived easily enough. Therefore I frankly admit that there is a little selfishness in the plan. But consider, Riverton has many advantages for the children. You can send the little girls to Miss Brushfield, (a most excellent woman; I don't know a better,) and I really think Herbert would be benefited by roughing it a little among the King's School-boys." And he drew back, as if to observe the effect of his suggestion on my countenance.

"You look dubious on that point," he continued; "but think, my good friend, that little lad has to work his way in the world; he will have to meet with many harder knocks bye-and-bye than any which he will get at school. He can't always have his tutor by his side; and that tutor," he added, good-humouredly, "so tender with him. Not that I should be otherwise myself, mind,—not a bit of it;—I should pet the child ridiculously under the circumstances, I'm sure; but you must allow that that sort of thing can't go on always, and that it may be well to break him in gently to the harness he will have to wear."

"Of course," he went on, seeing that I remained silent, "you will live in this house rent-free, seeing that I must keep it up whether I occupy it or no. I should retain two or three rooms in it for myself, when I come to keep my residence. Be my curate till the year's out, and then, (if you like,) do duty in Riverton."

It was impossible to resist the proposition thus urged. The fact that the arrangement would be

agreeable to the kind old man was in itself sufficient to silence all opposition.

The pain of leaving Inglethwaite would not now be felt by the children, who had become accustomed to another residence ; and I could not deny that the advantage to little Emily, and ultimately to her infant sister, might be very great. With regard to Herbert, it was not necessary to send him immediately to school, even if we remained at Riverton : but I felt the force of the Archdeacon's remarks ; and when the first involuntary repugnance to the proposal had subsided, I could not but see that true friendliness to my favourite had prompted his advice.

I sounded Herbert himself on the point ; and, to my surprise, found him willing to go to school.

We were sitting over the fire one evening, after witnessing a great foot-ball match : I said, "Well, Herby, and how would you like to be one of the King's School-boys?"

He looked up in my face, and said boldly, "I should like it very much." Then, as if suddenly fearing that his words might give me pain, he coloured, and striving in vain to clothe his thoughts in speech, he only squeezed my hand.

I hastened to reassure him by my reply ; and indeed I was much relieved to find that no persuasion would be needed to induce him to encounter the miniature world of the school.

Children often surprise us by such unexpected acquiescence in our wishes. The truth is, that we,

with the aid of experience, perceive difficulties and dangers of which the innocent child suspects not the existence. I believe that, in the majority of instances, little boys readily welcome the prospect of school; it is a stepping-stone to manhood, a stride in the direction of complete independence. They see not the angry surges which rage around the stepping-stone, nor fear the dangers which lurk on each side of the road to independence. These are patent enough to our own eyes; and many of my readers will share the feeling to which I give expression, when I say that I regard with deep and tender pity any little boy who, fresh from the innocence of home, is left for the first time under the roof of school. He must acquire the knowledge of much evil; we can only breathe the prayer that he may be preserved from the practice of it.

In Herbert's case there was much to alleviate the anxiety with which I contemplated his entrance on the school-world. In the first instance, he would, of course, attend the school as a day-scholar; the gentle influence of home, therefore, might be combined with the invigorating discipline of the school. Under the auspices of Arthur Morley, moreover, I might fairly hope that Herbert would be favourably introduced to his school-fellows. I was quite sure, at any rate, that if Arthur now and then teased, or even oppressed the little boy, he would allow no one else to annoy him.

In this remark, as it seems to me, lies the substance of the only valid defence of the fagging system. No

doubt the timid little fag purchases immunity from more general oppression by abject submission to the arbitrary will of one young master, who may or may not be a tyrant and a bully. On this one argument the few remaining advocates of a system wholly unsuited to a civilized age must take their stand.

I do not intend to describe in detail Herbert's school-life. The temptation is great to recall some of the incidents, grave as well as gay, which chequered it; but school-life has often been pictured, (though with varying degrees of success,) and there was nothing in the five years spent by Herbert at Riverton School to distinguish that period of his life from similar periods in the lives of other schoolboys, or, perhaps, of some of my readers. During the first year he attended as a day-scholar; afterwards, though a regular inmate of Dr. Maynard's own house, he had frequent opportunities of seeing his old tutor.

The boy was happy at school. To some, God gives the faculty of awakening interest and inspiring esteem in the breasts of others, and Herbert was gifted with this faculty. The same indescribable charm which had arrested my own attention in the very outset of our acquaintance, and which had led to that series of events which seem, as I write even now, like the changing scenes of a dream, attended him in his school career, and raised everywhere a prepossession in his favour. His gentleness and unruffled sweetness of temper atoned for the absence of those shining

talents which raised other boys to higher distinction in the school: he never stood very high in his class, but every master had a kind smile for the lad when he met him in the school-walks, or on the "Bats," as the meadows by the river were locally named; and there was not a boy in the school who would bully the inoffensive little Falconer, or who would refuse to help him in his work or his play.

And as he grew up, tall and well-formed, he was not unskilful in the popular sports of the place. True, he never became an enthusiast, like his friend Arthur, in the noble art of defending the wicket. I suspect that the readiness with which he obeyed the summons to foot-ball sprang less from love of the game than from a desire to please others; but both in cricket and foot-ball he certainly joined with ready good-will.

In the playground or out of it, I repeat, Herbert was the favourite of all. And if the less happy experience, or the preconceived ideas, of any of my readers lead them to doubt the reality of school-days so tranquil, I can only assure them that I sketch from the life, and that while I omit the finer lines, I faithfully pourtray the general features of the picture.

If I were the biographer of Frank, I must dip my pencil in more fiery colours. His career, from the day when he joined his brother at school, to that on which he donned the blue uniform of her Majesty's navy, was one of incessant warfare,—a very Ishmael! But Herbert had the good word of old and young;

and I trust that, without irreverence, I may apply to him those words with which the Evangelist calls up before us an Image of consummate beauty,—“he increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.”

I did not seek a cure in Riverton. Indeed, the course of events soon released me from the necessity of residence there. The Misses Brushfield, who had long kept a school of high repute, resolved to retire from their more arduous labours soon after our arrival at Riverton. This circumstance, which I had bewailed as a misfortune, proved ultimately to be of great advantage to us; for, becoming tired of complete inaction, they offered to undertake the charge of the two little girls. In the end, the four younger children found a happy home with these truly Christian women; and I, not without a strange feeling akin to melancholy, found myself at liberty to revisit my old rooms in college.

CHAPTER XV.

ARTHUR Morley's father had died some two or three years after I made his acquaintance, and I had not been many months in college before he came up to the University as a freshman. Arthur was an only son; his mother and sisters idolized him; and

since his father's death he had hardly had one ungratified wish. To do him justice, his wishes had not yet led him into any unpardonable folly. He had taken infinite pains to level, drain, and roll a cricket-ground at Morley, and had exerted himself to the utmost to foster a taste for that truly English game among the men and lads on the estate: he was heartily seconded in this by the clergyman of the parish, who rejoiced to see so healthy an association of the labourers' sons with the young squire. His mother had allowed him a couple of hunters; and when hard frosts condemned them to inaction, he spent the wintry day in a search for snipes among the ditches which thickly intersect the fields in that county, or for wild-duck among the sedgy marshes near the lake. In all this, as I have said, there was nothing which verged on misconduct; but I feared the consequences of transplanting a youth who had no tastes more intellectual than these to the uncongenial life of an University.

Arthur was himself very unwilling to be entered at college. He wished to remain at home with his horses and guns, and with the Morley cricket-club. For the army he never shewed any inclination. At last, however, yielding to the wishes of his mother and guardian, he consented to undergo the ordeal of college; but on one condition, namely, that the two hunters should accompany him to Cambridge.

The result was easily foreseen by everyone conversant in the slightest degree with University life.

Arthur came up, and established himself in the venerable rooms which I had chosen for him. For one term he lived a life of idleness indeed, but of sobriety. He took no pleasure whatever in the studies or routine of the place; but he did not come into collision with the authorities, and maintained an outward obedience to the laws. This did not last long. It is most distasteful to me to refer to these pages of my humble chronicle, but truth compels me to go on. If there be a spectacle which angels weep to witness, it must be that of the gradual downfall from innocence to vice of noble youth. I saw with pain, but without surprise, that Arthur's associates were chiefly men notorious for their irregularities. Often was I grieved to hear, issuing from his brightly illumined windows, the sounds, not of mere youthful merriment and boisterous cheerfulness, but of more debasing revels. Often, when the bright lights continued burning long after midnight, while dead silence reigned throughout the spacious quadrangle, I had too much reason to fear that the excitement of play had been caught by the inexperienced young man from the older associates, who had found in him an apt pupil and a welcome prize.

I shall not dwell on this: I regret that it is essential to the purposes of my story to introduce it. It must suffice to add, that in his third term poor Arthur was dismissed from the University for a very daring violation of its laws; and that the tradesmen's bills which followed him into the country amounted

to a sum so extravagant, that his guardian (a plain country gentleman) came up in the utmost alarm to ascertain for himself if such lavish expenditure were possible. Alas! he had still to learn the worst. The poor fellow, the dupe of abler adepts in vice, wrote a letter to his guardian, couched in terms of passionate regret, confessing that "his debts of honour" far exceeded the sums which had already caused such consternation, and unfolding such complicated embarrassments, that the complete ruin of his family seemed inevitable!

I heard soon afterwards that his mother and sisters had taken a small house near Riverton, and that he had left the country.

Herbert was now nearly fifteen years of age. Although I no longer resided at Riverton, I paid frequent visits to my kind friend the Archdeacon; and I had many opportunities of seeing Herbert, in whom the dignitary was hardly less interested than myself. I always timed my summer visits so as to coincide with Herbert's holidays; and many long expeditions we made together—sometimes with Harry for a companion, (Frank was at sea,)—in search of rare specimens of the insect tribe. He had twice visited me, during his winter holidays, at Cambridge; and there the ruling passion for natural history had been gratified and stimulated by unwearied researches among the treasures of the Museum, and among the scientific works in the libraries. One of the professors

noticed him most kindly, and told me afterwards that his acquaintance with entomology was unusually extensive for one so young. I meditated several different plans for fostering and encouraging this predominant talent in the boy, and held up to him the prospect of ultimately achieving eminence in this branch of science.

I had gradually made him acquainted with the sad circumstances which had led to his parents' fatal voyage. With the guileless simplicity of youth, he had been unable to appreciate the real nature of the situation in which those circumstances had placed his father; but his mind had grasped the more practical conception of his own position and duties relative to his brothers and sisters. He saw clearly that on him would devolve the duty of protecting and maintaining his sisters; and I feared that I had impressed this on him too early, when I noticed the premature look of care which sometimes clouded his face.

I had allowed myself to indulge some pleasant hopes of seeing him a member of my own college, and, possibly, an ornament to it. Somewhat injudiciously, perhaps, I mooted this project to him one evening, as he sat at tea in my rooms. A bright look of pleasure lighted up his countenance for a moment, and then was suddenly succeeded by a shade of gloom.

"Would you not like it, Herbert?"

"Oh, Mr. M——, if it ever could be! I know it never can! I must be earning something, you know; not wait so long. Why, there's George Wil-

liams, who left school last half, is getting £80 a-year somewhere, by doing something—I don't know what. Only think, Mr. M——, £80 a-year!"

I reproached myself bitterly with my want of judgment in this matter, and tried to make Herbert see that he would work best for himself and his sisters by diligently following his studies, and by mastering thoroughly and completely all he read. But I saw that I had yet much to learn in the management of the young; and I reflected with sorrow that all my subsequent caution would not remove the care which I had thoughtlessly laid upon his heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE next half-year passed tranquilly away, and its close brought a letter from Dr. Maynard, filled, indeed, with praises of Herbert's good conduct, but recommending a change in the place and method of his education. The great quickness and decided talent of Harry (wrote the learned Doctor) was disadvantageous to his elder brother, whose abilities, he hinted, were not of a high order. The younger boy gave promise of a distinguished school career; and to avoid comparisons unfavourable to Herbert, he advised his removal to some other school, or the resumption of private tuition.

The Doctor's advice coincided with conclusions at

which I had arrived after much anxious thought ; and when the holidays commenced, Herbert bade farewell to the schoolrooms and playground of Riverton, bearing away with him the first prize for uniform steadiness and good behaviour.

I had formed no definite plans for him, when the Archdeacon invited us to visit him at Inglethwaite ; and I looked forward with infinite satisfaction to the assistance which I should derive from the shrewd counsel and genuine kindness of the excellent old man.

I cannot attempt to describe the mingled emotions with which I entered the garden-gate of the vicarage, after a walk from Riverton with Herbert. I had often been at Inglethwaite, of course, during the last few years,—for several weeks in each year I had officiated as the Archdeacon's curate,—yet never on any previous occasion had the flood of tender memories so completely carried my mind back to the past as on this. The garden was unaltered since the day when I entered it conversing with the mother of the little Herbert, now dear to me as my own son. On our left, immediately within the wicket, lay the plot of ground once assigned to Herbert as his own peculiar charge : the flowering shrubs now waved luxuriantly over it, and their shade added a deeper tinge to the dark carpeting of ground-ivy and periwinkle which concealed the soil. A few of Herbert's childish favourites, the "London Pride," the "Sweet William," and the Wall-flower, strove to raise their heads above

the tangled mass which had usurped the little territory.

I did not call the attention of my companion to the condition of his old garden-plot; and I doubt if his thoughts were in any degree occupied by it, or were at all the reflections of my own. I had learnt the lesson in our conversation at Cambridge, to use caution in the attempt to make the youth a sharer in the deep feelings and busy projects of a matured mind.

I suppressed my emotion; and we were soon greeted with boisterous welcome by the Archdeacon.

Certainly our host possessed in a remarkable degree that ready tact which places the young and timid at their ease in a moment, which instinctively avoids every topic likely to give pain to any listener, and with happy art leads the conversation to subjects in which all can feel an interest. He saw at a glance that the place awakened painful memories in my own mind, and that my youthful companion, now at an age when shyness often causes real suffering, was uneasy and discomposed; and the ease with which he applied a remedy to both the cases aroused my unfeigned admiration. Talking incessantly, he hardly suffered us to enter the house; but, seizing his shovel-hat, he led us to visit an otter, which inhabited a little grotto, fenced with wire, in a corner of the garden. Then the hay required inspection, and afterwards the horses (in which the worthy owner took great interest) must be examined and petted; and all and every of these objects suggested voluminous

histories, often so humorous, and so humorously told, that the two listeners were convulsed with laughter. When, at last, we turned towards the house, we found that the dinner-hour had already arrived. After dinner, Herbert was challenged by the old lady to a game at draughts; and the Arch-deacon and I had full leisure to discuss his future destination.

"That's a fine lad," quoth my host. "You mark my words,—he'll do well."

"I feel sure of it," was my reply; "but in what capacity? How to start him on the road of life is the perplexing question."

"Do you remember," said he, "a conversation which you and I once had about special talents, and the neglect of them in public schools? You do?—Well; what I said then, I say now; that such special talents are given to be used and improved for the glory of the Divine Giver. If I had a parcel of boys," (he had no children,)—"if I had a parcel of boys, and little to give them save a careful education, I should study their peculiar and individual talents, and bring them up accordingly. If one of them was always covering the carpet with chips, and the table-cover with drops of hot glue, I should give him tools, and insist on finished results. I do not mean that he must become a joiner, or a mechanic; but I would let his talent have fair play, and see what it came to. If another wearied me out of my life with strumming on the piano, he should have one in the attic, and

learn to play it properly. He needn't be a music-master: but no wrapping up of talents in napkins for me!"

"And what," I struck in, "if your boys had no talents at all, save for bowling, and batting, and shooting, and riding?"

"They should bowl and bat till they were tired," said he, decisively. "As to shooting and riding, they could have little of these if (as I assume) I am not wealthy. But I frankly admit to you, that I should be deeply grieved, and sorely puzzled, if any son of mine had not a thought beyond the sports of the field, and the pursuit of those merely animal gratifications in which the savage is our superior. But we have beaten about the bush long enough. We both have that youngster in our eye. That decided turn for natural history must not be neglected."

He paused; and I remained silent.

"My advice is this," continued the Archdeacon, slowly and distinctly: "fix on no profession for him at present, but keep him with you for a year, and let him see a little of the world. He is old enough to profit by travelling, and young enough to receive strong and lasting impressions from it. I would by all means keep up his Latin and Greek, but at the same time let him extend and carry forward his favourite study of animals and insects. By the way," said he, "Hartlebury told me the other day that they (Lady Ann and he) had lately seen the museums of the Jardin des Plantes at Paris, and that they are

really wonderful. Take Herbert over, this long vacation, and let him feast his eyes on these wonders ; and mind, he goes at my expense. Not a word, my good Sir,—not a syllable ! I've done nothing yet for poor Falconer's family."

He would not hear of thanks. I told him of my conversation with Herbert at Cambridge, and could see that he was touched by the boy's unselfish sense of duty.

"Poor lad ! poor lad !" he said : "don't let his mind dwell on such cares ; he is too young for them. You will see,—his talents will save him from mere drudgery, in spite of old Maynard's low estimate of them."

He led the way to the drawing-room, and pausing at the door, with his hand on the lock, said, in a low tone, "Young Morley ! what a sad case is his ! I hear that he is utterly lost and abandoned. He is somewhere on the Continent,—at Baden, I fancy. I grieve for poor Mrs. Morley."

Herbert's eyes sparkled when he heard of the intended visit to Paris. Our arrangements were soon made, and on a glorious day in June we arrived in the gay metropolis of France.

It is not at all essential to my present purpose to describe the minor incidents of our sojourn there. My readers would care little to hear how we stood on the *Arc de Triomphe*, and admired the unrivalled stretch out before us ; how we sauntered

in the Boulevards, amused by the out-of-door life of the Parisians; how we gazed at the high roofs and innumerable windows of the Tuileries, and forgot the lapse of time in the Louvre. The pleasure and excitement of my youthful companion may well be left to the imagination of my readers, many of whom can probably supply, from their own experience, a conception of the novel sensations excited by a first sojourn among a people whose every-day life differs so widely from our own. Suffice it to say, that we spent many hours of each day in examining the beauties and marvels of the gayest city in the world; and when we returned, fatigued, to our *apartement*, the pleasure of recalling all that we had seen almost equalled the reality itself.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MONTH had glided by, and we were meditating a return to England. After a long visit to the museums, we had wended our way homewards, and were entering our abode in the Rue —, when the *concierge* presented me with a note. I opened it, and with great surprise read as follows:—

“MY DEAR MR. M —.—,—I saw you and Herbert to-day in the street. If you knew the agony of shame and of remorse which the sight of my old school-fellow awakened in my mind, you would indeed pity

me. I am lost,—utterly lost and wretched. He is pure and innocent,—as I once was! I followed you at a distance, and watched you to your lodging. If the bitterest regret can ever atone for crime and folly, some atonement has been made for mine.—May I venture to hope that you will come to me, and give me one ray of hope and consolation to the unhappy ARTHUR MORLEY?"

The note bore the name of an obscure street, and was hardly legible. I hastily communicated its contents to Herbert, and bidding him follow me, I threw myself into a cabriolet, and bade the driver convey us to the address given in the note. On the way, I regretted my precipitation in bringing Herbert with me to such a quarter of the city, on an errand so painful: I resolved, however, to leave him in the vehicle while I visited the unfortunate young man.

After threading innumerable narrow streets, we stopped under the *porte cochère* of a building which had once evidently been the hotel of some great personage. The air of gloom and neglect, however, which marked its exterior, shewed that it was now inhabited by lodgers of the humblest class. I learnt from a decrepid old woman who occupied the cell of the *concierge*, that Monsieur Morley inhabited an *apartement* in the *entresol*. I mounted the creaking staircase, and tapped at the door. It was opened by a woman whose singularly dark complexion shewed that she was no Frenchwoman, and who, though no longer young, retained the signs of much beauty. She

admitted me with an expression of joy, and in another moment I was in the presence of Arthur.

"Arthur Morley!" I involuntarily exclaimed;—could the emaciated figure which lay stretched on a sofa be indeed the Arthur Morley whose manly strength and youthful freshness had once been marked and admired by all! For a moment I really did not recognise him, and half imagined that I had made a mistake in the address, or was the victim of some artful impostor. But I was soon undeceived. Stretching his hand out feebly, he murmured, "This is kind! But where is Herbert Falconer?"

The name was hardly out of his mouth, and I had not time to reply, when the dark woman, who stood watching us, strode forward to the couch, and with a gesture and a countenance almost desperate, said, "Whom did you mention? Herbert——Say the name again!"

"Why, Rosa," began the poor fellow, half raising himself, "in the name of all that's——"

"Say the name again!" she screamed.

"My good woman," I interposed, bewildered by this scene, "what can the name of Herbert Falconer be to you?"

"Herbert Falconer!" she repeated slowly, and relaxing her grip of Arthur's hand. "My God! is Herbert Falconer here?" She sank on the ground, and if I had not supported her head, it would have fallen heavily, for she had fainted.

Morley had risen feebly from his couch, and to-

gether we called loudly for assistance. The woman, still insensible, was removed to another room, leaving us in a state of profound astonishment at her sudden seizure. For my own part, I did not form the slightest idea of its cause. Perhaps her name would have given me a clue to the truth, if my mind had not been utterly bewildered by the suddenness of the occurrence, and by a most painful sense of curiosity, which overleapt the immediate and the obvious, to seize on the most remote and improbable conjectures. The mere mention of my ward's name by this woman was most distasteful to me. Others, in the like circumstances, might have divined at once the real state of the case,—I did not. A vague suspicion that some danger threatened my boy blinded my judgment; I felt as if a wrong were already done him, by the mere association of his name with the sinful and the fallen. And when I had seen Arthur again stretched on his sofa, and had soothed him with the promise of my speedy return, I hastened down to the cabriolet, and experienced an indescribable and wholly unreasonable sensation of relief on seeing Herbert's face watching for my coming with no other expression than that of excusable weariness. I bade the driver return to our lodging; and I seemed to breathe more freely when we found ourselves again "at home." Charging Herbert to remain within, and to see no one, I wended my way on foot to the Faubourg St. Antoine, out of which branched the obscure street in which Arthur's lodging was situated.

"Rosa" had not reappeared. I drew a chair by the invalid, and began a conversation on some general subject, but he at once reverted to the scene which we had just witnessed, and which superseded in interest even his own sad state.

"I cannot conceive," he began, "why Rosa broke out in this way. But I suppose she has known some one of the same name as Herbert. These West Indians are excitable creatures, and"——

I interrupted him by an exclamation. The whole truth flashed upon me at once. Rosa, a West Indian! —"From Jamaica?" I asked in great agitation.

He did not know. "But if you will let me," he said, "I will tell you all I know about her. It is only a part of my sad story," he continued, with a touching expression of penitence on his countenance: "I intended to ask you to hear it all. You will not reproach me? You know not what I have suffered, indeed."

I took his hand, and said a few soothing words, begging him to tell me as much or as little of his history as he should deem best for his own comfort.

In a low tone he began his tale. He said that when he left England, overwhelmed with remorse at the ruin which he had brought on his mother and sisters, he had resolved to enter the military service of one of the German states, and for this purpose he had made his way through France, travelling in the cheapest manner, and denying himself even the commonest indulgences. He had been compelled to halt

for a short time, however, at a town (which he named) near the frontier; and there the love of play (of which he spoke with horror, as exercising a fascination over its votaries almost irresistible,) had overpowered his better resolutions. He had sauntered into a gaming-house, and had been too easily overcome by the temptation to stake a small sum. He found himself a winner; and when he left the table he was again rich!

Such gains are tainted with the curse of sin,—no blessing can attend them. Poor Arthur found this true once more, to his cost. A burning desire took possession of him to win back the entire amount of his losses. His dreams that night, he said, dwelt upon success at the table which made him lord of fabulous wealth. Happiness too great for realization was granted to his sleeping fancy by a vision of his own return, loaded with ample treasures, to lay the whole, with tears of mingled penitence and joy, at his mother's feet. He rose, to find this a dream, indeed, but to experience a strange and superstitious reliance on it as a fortunate omen.

I need hardly sketch the sequel. He entered the gaming-house confident of success,—he left it a beggar, almost a madman. I never can forget the thrill of horror which ran through me, as, heated by his sad narrative, he clutched my arm, and attempted to describe the despair which settled on his heart when he found himself destitute.

For a moment, he said, he stood incredulous. So

infatuated had he been by the persuasion of his own good fortune, that the disappointment stunned him. Then, he said, a deep thick gloom—something almost tangible and palpable—seemed to close round his heart. A vision which broke through it in one place, of his early home, his loving mother and sisters, only added to its horror. He said he could realize the feelings of a drowning man, who, as he sinks beneath the dark waters, casts his dying look on a bright shore, basking in sunshine. There was fearful danger in that thought!—A river ran through the town,—sluggish, deep. In one spot, a street crossed it by a narrow bridge, spanning it at a point where lofty buildings hemmed it in a narrow channel. With an icy coldness at his heart, while his brain burned with the fire of madness, he rushed from the gaming-table, almost knocking down a woman who stood near the door in the attitude of an eager watcher, and ran headlong towards this bridge. In a few moments, he said, (with an agitation which choked his utterance), all would have been over,—at least in this life. But God had mercy on him. His foot was on the parapet, when a woman's voice cried for help, and shrieks resounded through the deserted streets. The impulse to assist another saved his own life. In an instant he was by the woman's side, and was firmly grasped and held by her, while her feigned cry of distress was changed into loud calls for the *gendarmes*.—Assistance reached her, and Arthur was conveyed to a place of safety.—“From that day,” said he, “that noble

woman has been my guardian-angel. She has nursed me through a fearful fever ; she has watched by me — begged for me. May God reward her ! I never can !” He sank back, quite exhausted, and I rose to pour out a little water for him.

I was about to commence my own narrative of the occurrences in which Rosa was probably a sharer, when the door was slowly opened, and she entered. Approaching Arthur, she said, with the gentlest tenderness, “Forgive me for frightening you so much ;— you cannot bear such violent scenes.” Then, turning to me, she said, “You also will pardon me, Sir, for my folly. But, I beseech you, tell me, is Herbert Falconer here in Paris ?”—She awaited my answer with a face on which the strongest interest was depicted. I could not evade an affirmative reply.

“Is he in a safe place, with safe people ?” she asked, wildly.

“I trust so,” I said, half shuddering. “For Heaven’s sake, why do you ask ?”

“Those who have injured him before might injure him again,” said she, as if speaking to herself. “I dare say, Sir, you do not know the wrong which has been done him.”

“You are mistaken,” I said. “You yourself are not unknown to me. I saw the letter which you wrote, seven years ago and more, to his mother. I am now Herbert’s guardian, and he is as a son to me. Let me hope that you will aid me, if you can, in repairing that great wrong of which you speak. Your

kindness to Arthur bids me confidently rely on your assistance."

During this colloquy Arthur looked from one speaker to the other with an air of complete perplexity.

Rosa seemed to be overcome by painful emotions, and she hid her face in her hands. At last she exclaimed with energy, "I will spare him no longer. All these years I have shielded him,—and how has he repaid me? I will tell all. Sir, I can give your adopted son his rights! I can prove that Philip Falconer, of Kingston, has no more title than I have to the plantations at Blue Hills! I can prove him no true, lawful son of the uncle who died in England! I can prove more, Sir!" (her voice rising with her excitement,)—"I can prove that that uncle made a will, and that that vile scoundrel made away with it!—But you must save me from his anger," she said, her voice sinking as if in terror: "he is awfully cruel! And keep the boy from him! For God's sake mind what you do and say in the matter!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN my lodging that evening I pondered deeply over the strange events of the day. Thankfulness to God for the hope now raised of restoring the orphan family to affluence, was mingled with a painful consciousness of my own entire ignorance of the steps necessary to render the evidence of Rosa available for our purposes. The vague fear of foul play towards Herbert returned upon me, aggravated and increased by the evident terror and emphatic warnings of the woman.

I determined to proceed at once to England with Herbert ; and to return, armed with the advice of the Archdeacon, and perhaps accompanied by Mr. Deedes, the lawyer.

But the events of the next day changed my resolution. I had not risen, when a note was brought to me, written by Arthur. He begged me to come instantly to him, adding that he believed he could communicate to me some intelligence of great importance.

Hastening to him, I found him alone. He was pacing up and down the room ; one of the sudden changes, to which his enfeebled condition rendered him liable, had come over him, and a feverish flush was on his cheek.

He hardly gave me time to greet him, when he said, " She is gone to Philip Falconer. He sent for

her. He is dying! He has been stabbed in some affray!"

"Dying!" I repeated, without perceiving at the moment the bearing of this intelligence on my own proceedings,—“dying!”

“Yes, he is dying,” answered Arthur: “and if you wish to get any confession or disclosure from him, you must lose no time.”

I stood irresolute. The even course of my life had been so free from scenes of an exciting character, that I was quite unequal to such emergencies. Arthur, though so far my junior, had learnt too well the hard lessons of the battle of life; and with an expression closely allied to impatience, he said, “Go to him at once. Lose not a moment. All may turn on the next half-hour, if he lives so long. I learnt all from Rosa yesterday.” He almost pushed me from the room, as he impressed on me the name of the hospital in which the wounded man was lying.

The full importance of the errand presented itself strongly to my mind as I traversed the streets which led to the hospital. How I wished that Mr. Deedes—cool, phlegmatic, and far-seeing Mr. Deedes—were with me! I recollected the dislike with which I had once regarded him, and resolved to suspend my judgment in future until some secure foundation were laid for it. But I had little time for such reflections; I was now at the door of the hospital, and, invoking the aid of God, I was escorted to the ward set apart for casualties.

Directly opposite the door a group of persons were gathered round a pallet-bed. An aged priest, of most venerable aspect, stood near the foot of the couch, watching with eager interest the efforts of the patient to use a pen, placed in his hand by a notary. A Sister of Charity held a document, spread on a book, while another sister aided Rosa in supporting the wounded man. So striking was the scene, that for the moment I stood regarding it almost as a pictorial effect, rather than a passage in the drama of real life.

The noise made by my entrance startled the priest, who turned round, and came to meet me.

"Sir," he said, in French, "he has confessed all. He is signing a confession made before Monsieur the notary. The young gentleman will have his inheritance. May the good God forgive this poor sinner all his crimes !"

One of the sisters now approached, and in a low voice begged that I would withdraw. The paper was signed, she said, and the notary would read its contents to me in an adjoining apartment : the patient's extreme exhaustion rendered profound quiet essential to him. At the same moment Rosa turned on me a look in which an expression of deep grief seemed to contend with thankfulness, and waved her hand as if to implore me to depart.

In a few moments the notary followed me ; and I sat down with indescribable interest to read the paper which he had duly attested.

Instead, however, of giving a mere transcript of

it here, I prefer to incorporate with its contents the information which was subsequently given by Rosa, and thus to put my readers in possession of the whole of the circumstances which had exercised so mighty an influence on the fortunes of the Falconer family.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE worthy Archdeacon of Riverton little thought that the trip to Paris, so kindly planned by him, would be prolific of consequences so momentous to Herbert. When my letter, detailing the strange series of events just related, reached him at Inglethwaite, his astonishment and elation were extreme. He told me afterwards that he had been on the point of setting off for Paris: from this his anxious wife dissuaded him, however. Then he resolved to despatch Mr. Deedes to my aid; but reflection had led him to the conclusion that Deedes, probably, knew nothing of the forms which might be necessary in France, and that his presence might prove an encumbrance rather than an assistance to me. The shrewd old gentleman left me, therefore, to manage the matter as best I might; but with true consideration, he sent a trusty servant to Dover to await the arrival of Herbert, whom, in accordance with the Archdeacon's strong advice, I at once accompanied to the packet.

Herbert pleaded hard to stay. His affectionate sympathy was strongly aroused by the sad state of his old friend Arthur. I had not, indeed, allowed them to meet;—it was enough for Herbert to hear that Arthur was ill, and needed kind nursing. He could not understand why I did not at once take him to Arthur: in truth, I feared the impression which the poor fellow's emaciated appearance might make upon the boy; and I dreaded more than ever the agitation which the sight of Herbert might arouse in Arthur, and the scene which might ensue if Rosa encountered him.

· He set off for Calais next day; and when I heard of his safe arrival at Dover, and of his departure with the butler for Inglethwaite, I felt for the first time that I could give my whole thoughts to the business before me.

It must not be supposed that the whole of Philip Falconer's confession was comprised in the short document attested by the notary; that document merely furnished the outline or skeleton of the story, which our subsequent enquiries and the evidence of Rosa enabled us to complete.

The late Mr. Herbert Falconer had been lawfully married to the mother of his large family; but he had had no comfort or happiness in his West Indian home. His wife—a Creole woman of low degree—had passed her time in the unrestrained enjoyment of luxuries to which she had not been born; and as her

children grew up around her, she had never roused herself from her habitual extreme indolence so far as to correct any of their faults. They were left to the society of the negro servants on the estate, and the boys were soon notorious among them for early proficiency in vice of every kind. Their father, whom they had often deceived (even when mere children,) with the connivance of their mother, soon found himself no match for the reckless young men; and after the death of his wife, followed by that of two daughters, he determined to seek an asylum from his cares and miseries in England.

It was with a feeling of relief that I learnt that he had certainly made a just distribution of his property. The facts now brought to light certainly cleared his memory from the charge which had brooded darkly over it, of unparalleled cruelty to his English nephew.

It appeared that before his departure from Jamaica, he had summoned his three sons to his presence, and had announced to them his intention of leaving to them his West Indian estates. He implored them to abandon their wicked courses; assuring them that industry and steadiness would enable them to derive from the estates, as joint-partners, an income very ample for their wants.

Alas! he himself had never instilled into his sons those higher principles of action which religion sets before us; and even in his parting address to them, he knew not how to touch any nobler chord in their hearts than that which vibrates with the strong love of gain.

Could he wonder if the news soon reached him in England, of utter idleness and profligacy on the part of his sons ?

Can we feel any surprise that, when he retired to Inglethwaite, he concealed from his nephew the very existence of children who had brought on him nothing save shame and sorrow ?

Nay, further. Can it awaken any astonishment in the minds of my readers, that these worthless sons, brought up in ignorance of religion, were capable of conspiring to rob the father whom they had never honoured ? They knew that he had amassed large funds. In an evil moment, he had declared his intention of bequeathing those funds to relatives worthier of the gift than they were. Their applications to their father for pecuniary advances, though insolently worded, had been met by him with frequent remittances ; and the channel through which these remittances were forwarded had given them a clue as to the whereabouts of the securities for their father's property, and of the will which provided for its apportionment.

I will not attempt to unravel the tissue of fraud, deception, and *forgery*, by which these miserable men succeeded in obtaining possession of these documents. With consummate art, and with a display of ability which might have achieved brilliant success in an honest calling, they had effected their vile object ; by means of an accomplice in London, had kept unhappy father in ignorance of his loss.

The old man had shrunk of late years from all details of business: if vague suspicions that his gains, too dearly prized, were seriously diminished by his frequent remittances ever crossed his mind, he dismissed them with the indolent recklessness of an invalid. The skilful swindler in London kept up an artful correspondence with him to the last; and when the news of his death appeared in the newspapers, he joined his confederates in Jamaica.

I am weary of these sickening details. The life of Herbert would not have been written, had I foreseen, when I began, the pain and disgust which the recital of such wickedness would cause to me.

Rosa had not for a long time suspected the fraudulent character of the young men's proceedings. But a violent quarrel among the brothers had opened her eyes to the full enormity of the crime which they were perpetrating. Expressions were used which left no doubt upon her mind that she had linked her fortunes with those of a forger. Long before that awful discovery was made, she had found to her cost that Philip Falconer was one in whom all the violent passions of our fallen nature were unrestrained by reverence for any laws; more than once his cruelty had driven her to the very verge of desperation: and it was in one of these moods that she had written the vague and incoherent letter which had re-awakened in my poor friend's mind the hope of recovering his rights.

She told us, that after despatching this letter to England, her apprehension of the possible conse-

quences to herself amounted to a species of agony. In his ungovernable fury, she did not doubt that Philip Falconer would take the life of one who had betrayed him. But no notice was taken of her letter; and the remembrance of her terror was too vivid to allow her to think of any similar attempt, at a subsequent period, to repair the wrong done to the English family.

So strange and so mysterious is human affection, so unreasoning in its choices of objects round which to twine its tendrils, that we can feel no surprise at the confession of poor Rosa, made with touching simplicity, that she loved Philip, in spite of the ill-treatment which she received at his hands.

He certainly grew somewhat more gentle towards her, she said : and then a new hope sprang up within her. He might be reclaimed. He might be led to see the terrible consequences of such a career as his, and to check his downward course. The premature end to which excess brought both his brothers, had certainly shocked him : she would use her best efforts, she resolved, to hold him back from the brink of the same gulf into which they had hurled themselves.

She had not seen our advertisement; but even if she had, no power would have induced her to crush her newly-born hopes by drawing down ruin on Philip. The picture which rose before her eyes, of that proud and harsh man softened and penitent, was far too bright to be rudely erased. Perhaps she was herself hardly conscious of the scene dimly shadowed forth in

the background of that mental picture ;—it shewed the penitent humbly striving to repair the wrongs which he had inflicted on his victims.

No wonder that her love kept her silent, when such a hope as this gilded it. The thought that justice might still be vindicated, not by the punishment, but by the repentance, of Philip, was the chief treasure of this true woman's heart.

Poor Rosa ! her cherished hope was soon destroyed.

The enquiries made by the detective officer, though conducted with the consummate dexterity which experience alone can give, did not escape the vigilant suspicion of the forger. All the darker passions of his nature were roused to a fearful pitch of intensity when he found that his crime was suspected, if not discovered. He furiously accused Rosa of conspiring with his former confederate to betray him. When he resolved to fly from Jamaica, he did not dare to leave her in the island ; and while he loathed the poor creature's presence, that presence was essential to his sense of safety.

She wondered often that he did not murder her. Willingly would she have resigned a life of indescribable misery. But the actual shedding of blood was not to stain the hand of the wretched man. He moved restlessly from one capital of Europe to another, ever accompanied by the unhappy Rosa ; and he sought at the gaming-table both the means of subsistence, and the excitement which banished for a while the fear of pursuing justice.

The rest is soon told. At Baden he had met with Arthur Morley ; and he it was who had won from that unfortunate young man the sums which he had madly staked. It was from his baleful society that Arthur had rushed, intent on suicide. It was Rosa who was watching for the young man, to implore him to beware of the consequences which would infallibly follow an association with Philip. She had seen him rush from the house ; she had been permitted to save his life. She had nursed him with a sister's tenderness through the fever which ensued ; and, with the sullen acquiescence of Philip, had become his attendant at Paris.

CHAPTER XX.

FOUR years have rolled away since that eventful visit to Paris. And now, as I lay down my pen, and look up at Herbert, who is gazing from the casement of my college-rooms, I can scarcely realize to myself that the scenes which I have feebly portrayed are indeed scenes from the experience of real life.

Herbert wears the garb of a student, and he is just entering upon University life. He has accompanied London : and I cannot but hope that my readers will feel an interest in a little scene which has been enacted in one of the hotels of the

In one of its rooms a party was collected. At one end of a table sat the Archdeacon; his honest face beaming with genuine happiness, and his infectious laugh at frequent intervals ringing through the apartment. Opposite to him stands Mr. Deedes, perfectly cool and unmoved; a pen in his mouth, and a bundle of papers in his hands. A bald-headed gentleman, with a bunch of massive seals dangling from his watch-chain, is unknown by sight to the reader, and must be introduced to him. It is Mr. Close Brown, whose connection as a merchant with the West Indies has enabled him to assist us most materially in our complicated investigations. Beside him sits his wife, in whose countenance I note a droll mixture of regard for her own dignity with respect for that of the Archdeacon. And who is the owner of the old-fashioned bonnet which trembles with the agitation of the wearer? Who but the good, faithful Johnson, whom the kind Archdeacon has brought from Inglethwaite purposely to be present? She stands near the closely-veiled figure of one whom we all recognise as the ill-fated Rosa. Herbert occupies the foreground; he has passed one arm within mine, and has laid the other lightly on the shoulder of Arthur, who has recovered once more the flush of health.

Mr. Deedes, removing the pen from his mouth, addresses the Archdeacon:—

“You are aware, Sir, that the extreme depression of West Indian property renders the present a very unfavourable period for a sale. However, the advan-

tageous position of Blue Hills plantation has enabled us to dispose of it on better terms than I expected. It has realized £12,000."

"Sterling, or currency?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Sterling," said the lawyer.

"I have obeyed your directions," continued Mr. Deedes, addressing Herbert with a dry hardness of manner, which seemed to betray a little contempt, "by preparing a draft of the arrangements which you desire. You share the money equally with your brothers and sisters?"

"Yes," answered Herbert. The Archdeacon nodded several times, and played an imaginary air on the table.

"The balance arising from the small residue of Mr. Herbert Falconer's personalty," continued the lawyer, "I have already invested in the purchase of annuities for Rosa Quincy, (otherwise Falconer,) and Martha Johnson respectively. I beg to hand to you the papers," (this to Herbert,) "and to wish you joy of your proud and happy position."

"And I say," exclaimed the Archdeacon, jumping up and ringing the bell, "that Herbert's health must and shall be drunk, with all the honours. Waiter, some champagne! Herbert, my dear boy, may God bless you!"

"I am sure," said Mrs. Close Brown, "it is most satisfactory to me to witness,—to—to—welcome,—to see so much which my dear father would have approved—"

"A thousand pardons, my dear Madam," interrupted the Archdeacon; "but time is precious. Herbert, my man, my love to ye! All success to ye as Curator of Beetles to the University of Cambridge! I knew your beetle-hunting would be useful to you, but I hardly thought it would take you to college, and pay all your expenses there, and leave you at liberty to indulge your affectionate generosity in providing for others. I honour you, my boy! and I envy you this moment!" He wrung Herbert's hand; and as the young man bent before him, he said, in a tone so low and so solemn, that I believe no one save the young man and I heard it, "May the Lord bless and keep you!"

And now we were hurried away to Mr. Close Brown's handsome carriage, which conveys us to Tavistock-square, in which Mr. Close Brown resides. And scarcely has the fat butler opened the door, before Herbert is seized and overwhelmed with kisses by Emily, now in all the fresh beauty of early womanhood, and by Alice, still a child. Harry, tall and grave, still in boyish garb, waits to greet his brother; while little Alfred has seized his hand already, and is dragging him within the house.

"Poor Frank!" is the cry: "how I wish he were here!"

A happy evening followed: the young people crowded around Mr. Close Brown, eager to learn some games, of which he proved a most able teacher, while I sat apart watching the group. That myste-

rious sadness which is the twin-sister of joy stole over me. My work was done, I felt, and a vague dreariness was in the thought. Perhaps Herbert perceived a shade of gloom upon my face; at any rate, he deserted the merry circle, and seating himself near me on the sofa, began to converse in a low tone:—

“How kind in Mr. Brown to take Arthur into his counting-house! I hear he works so hard! Mr. Brown says he will make a capital merchant.—Rosa, too,—she will indeed be a treasure as nurse to the Orphan School.”

He paused; and then, with a look and manner which reminded me most forcibly of the child whom I had fondled ten years before, he said, “O! Mr. M., I am so happy! I never can thank you enough for all you have done for me!”

“My boy,” said I, (for, as I said, I saw the child before me,) “I can never be thankful enough to God for allowing me to be of use to you all. I am more than repaid when I see you seeking your chief happiness in making others happy; for this great secret of life I learnt at Inglethwaite.”

The next day saw us at Cambridge.



